

I Mary

The Handmaiden

KJ Tim McDonald

**Dedicated
to all who trust in
Mary, the Mother of God.**

**Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners
Now and at the hour of our death
Amen**

This book is the second in a quintet of books inspired by the Bible. They have been written in a novel way, pun intended, to encourage us all to read through the Bible as one would read a novel, to develop the full context from which the quotations and short passages we are familiar with are drawn, and add to their richness.

The quintet is:

I Adam: The Old Testament told through the eyes of its major players, those who could stay faithful to God as Adam could not but whom Adam in Limbo wished he could be. “So the first man, as Scripture says, became a living soul,” (Corinthians 15:45)

I Mary: The New Testament told through the eyes of Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

I Paul: The Acts of the Apostles dealing with the life of Paul, interspersed with his Letters in their chronological order.

I Peter: A biography of the life of Peter - his early life, his life as a follower of Jesus, his life and death as the first head of the Christian Church, his letters.

I Joseph: A biography of Joseph, the husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus.

This booklet is intended to be used as a meditation on the life of Mary. It was inspired by the eight stained glass windows behind the Altar of Santa Maria Del Mar Catholic Church in Flagler Beach, Florida. However, stained glass windows with the same themes are found in many other Christian churches. The windows illustrate eight major events in the unfolding of good news of the salvation of mankind by Jesus the Son of God, and are meaningful to all Christians.



In prayer we are counselled to listen more than we speak. You can think of yourself as listening to Mary, the Mother of God, the subject of, or a major player in, each scene.

If you have not yet read the companion book, “I Adam”, you may wish to read it before you begin the Meditation in order to understand more fully the mindset of the young girl who so willingly and knowingly became the Handmaiden of the Lord, the Mother of His Son, the Mother of His Church and the Queen of Heaven and Earth. That said, there is no direct Biblical evidence that the young girl Mary spent some years in the Temple and was educated there by Simeon and others, but her knowledge of the Bible and its prophecies was certainly very extensive. This is one possible explanation.

The Rosary

Many Catholics regard the Rosary as the most important prayer form after the Mass. The full Rosary is a set of 20 meditations on events, called mysteries – for so they are - in the life of Jesus and his mother, Mary. When we say the Rosary we usually meditate on just five of the mysteries each time. During each meditation we say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and finish with a Glory Be to the Father, a 1-10-1 set of prayers called a decade which is repeated five times. To avoid the distraction of counting to 10 we use a set of beads constructed as a loop of five sets of 1-10-1 beads, with a crucifix and a 1-3-1 chain of beads attached,

We can certainly say the Rosary by concentrating on the words of the Our Father, the Hail Marys and the Glory be, but, more usually, we can use the prayers as a background mantra to a meditation on one of the mysteries chosen from the lives of Mary and/or Jesus. If you wish to pray the Rosary often, the 20 meditations can be done as follows.

On Monday, Saturday pray the Joyful Mysteries

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Birth of Our Lord
4. The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple
5. The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple

On Thursday pray the Luminous Mysteries

- 1 The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan
- 2 The Wedding at Cana
- 3 The Proclamation of the Good News – the Kingdom of God
- 4 The Transfiguration
- 5 The Last Supper

On Tuesday and Friday pray the Sorrowful Mysteries

1. The Agony of Our Lord in the Garden
- 2 The Scourging of Jesus
- 3 The Crowning with Thorns
- 4 The Carrying of the Cross to Calvary
- 5 The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus

On Wednesday and Sunday pray the Glorious Mysteries

- 1 The Resurrection
- 2 The Ascension
- 3 The Coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
- 4 The Assumption
- 5 The Coronation of Mary as the Queen of Heaven and Earth

So, how do we meditate? This book invites you to simply listen to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and the central figure or main onlooker in each and every one of these 20 events. You don't need to talk back to her, just listen and let her words come into your heart.

The Prelude tells you her story before Gabriel came with his invitation. You can find Mary's account of each of the 20 mysteries as well as linking stories in what follows the Prelude. You can either pray the Rosary or you can simply read the book and let Mary talk to you, that is meditation. If you choose to do that in Santa Maria Del Mar Catholic Church in Flagler Beach, Florida then you can feast your eyes and heart upon the eight stained glass panels behind the altar:

1. The Annunciation
2. Birth and Hidden Life of Jesus
3. The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan
4. The Good Shepherd (with the Good News)
5. The Feeding of the Followers of Jesus
6. The Crucifixion of Jesus
7. The Ascension of Jesus, the Son of God
8. The Assumption of Mary, the Mother of God

Prelude

Childhood

I was just a child, a mere girl. I didn't think I was anybody special. My parents, Joachim and Anne, doted on me and smothered me with love and affection. They brought me up to be a true Jew, abiding by the commandments and the teachings of God and the teachings of the rabbis in the Torah and the Talmud. Every morning and every evening my father led us in the reading of the Shema. He would say,

Cover your eyes with your right hand and say:

Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever...

We lived in the little village of Nazareth. My father was a shepherd and I often went with him into the fields to help care for our sheep and protect them from wolves and thieves. In mid-morning we ate our first meal of the day – flat bread, olives and cheese. When the sun set, we had our dinner meal of vegetable stew, bread, fruit, eggs, cheese or fish. On special occasions we had specially prepared red meat. Everybody drank wine and the vineyard was a very important component of our village.

I helped my mother to grind barley into flour for the bread and to keep our home neat and clean. My mother taught me to sew and to make my clothes. I had a long tunic reaching to my ankles as well as a thick woolen cloak and a shawl in the cold weather. My sandals and undergarments completed my outfit.

We were poor but not dreadfully so. Our house was a mixture of stone and mud heated in winter by a fire burning grass, thorn bushes and animal dung. For more warmth, our animals lived in our house on a floor of beaten earth. We lived on a raised platform in the other half of the room, with curtained off bedrooms. We dried fruits and grain on the roof of our home and in the hot days of summer we slept up there. Our beds were mattresses full of wool and straw, our blankets were made from goats' hair. When we ate, we sat on stools around a simple wooden table. The widows in our village were much poorer than we were and we often shared our food with them and their children.

We children played games on the street before dinner, drawing squares with a stick and jumping from one to another. The boys had a ball of tightly bound grass to kick around, whistles and spinning tops and we girls had hoops and skipping ropes. There

was a lot of laughter and singing. Now and again, someone would draw a picture on the street with a stick but a passing adult would soon stop that, saying the law forbade “graven images” as an affront to God. I did not agree with this but as a child, a mere girl, I kept my own counsel.

On the Sabbath we all went to our synagogue. We girls sat apart from the boys and men with our mothers. The Rabbi, our teacher, would choose a passage from the Bible and explain it to us, adding in laws and regulations from the Talmud. The Talmud was full of laws about every detail of our lives. I liked the opening words of the Shema better, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.”

After the service we went home for a meal cooked the day before. We spent the Sabbath day resting, no-one was allowed to work, not even to walk more than a mile. I talked to God, telling Him all my thoughts and hopes. Already I could see a lot of things wrong with the world but I did not know why God allowed these things. The Rabbi, a Pharisee, talked about sin and temptation, using the story of creation to explain the fall of Adam and Eve and all their descendants. I could not understand what sin was, I felt love for everyone and joyfully obeyed my parents and the teachings of the Rabbi. I loved my God whom I could not see.

I asked my parents why I didn’t have any brothers and sisters. They explained that for many years after they were married, they were unable to have a child. Then I came along! They were overjoyed. They told me they had made a promise to God that if they were to have a child, that child would be dedicated to God. I felt a great joy over this.

Shortly after my fifth birthday, I journeyed with my parents to Jerusalem. We joined a caravan of people from our village and other villages nearby. My parents had a donkey and a little cart. I walked and played with the other girls and rode in the cart when I was tired. At night we all camped by a big fire, said the Shema and other prayers and sang songs. We reached Jerusalem four days later. There was a huge crowd there, the streets were filled with people, all on their annual pilgrimage to the Temple.

I stood in awe in the outer courtyard of the Temple. I felt my God’s presence as never before. I was uneasy about the stalls around the walls, the raucous crowds, the yelling

and haggling, the merchants and money-changers urging their goods and services on anyone nearby.

Pharisees and Sadducees

My parents told me there was another religious party in Israel besides the Pharisees. I was confused by this, believing there is just one true God. I thought we should all worship Him in the same way and abide by His commandments and teachings set out in the Bible and the Talmud. My parents explained that all human beings do not have the same beliefs about serving God. The Pharisees believed in strict adherence to a whole lot of laws and prohibitions, many about the tiny details of life, how to get dressed, what to wear, what to eat. I realized now they were very proud of their strict beliefs and standing in Jewish society. My father had a phylactery and so did all his male friends. It was a small leather box containing Hebrew texts on vellum, worn by our Jewish men at morning prayer as a reminder to keep the Law. I noticed that the Pharisees had very wide phylacteries, decorated lavishly, telling everyone how important they were. My mother said the phylacteries were full of texts of hundreds of laws and prohibitions.

My father told me the other religious party in Israel were the Sadducees. He said they had the political power in Israel and they controlled the Temple and the worship and sacrifices held there. He told me the Sadducees were very different to the Pharisees. They were the priestly aristocracy. To them religious duties were firmly centered on Temple worship. They accepted only the Torah, the written Law of Moses – the first five Bible books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy - as authoritative, and rejected the other books as well as the detailed prescriptions for living the Jewish life set out in the Talmud. As a result, the Sadducees denied many of the doctrines held by the Pharisees including the resurrection of the dead, the existence of angels and spirits, and the meting out of rewards and punishment after death.

He said the Pharisees, on the other hand, were a lay group more representative of the common man. They controlled the many synagogues where they taught the Law and its interpretation by leading rabbis from long ago. In addition to the written Law of Moses, the Pharisees accepted as authoritative the rest of the Old Testament, as well as the "traditional interpretations by the elders" set out in the Talmud.

Sanhedrin

My father explained that these two religious parties were the core of the Jewish court system called the Sanhedrin, an institution created by Moses. The Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem was the supreme religious body in Israel, an assembly of 71 sages who met in the Chamber of Hewn Stones in the Temple in Jerusalem. The sages comprised Sadducees, Pharisees, lawyers, scribes and wealthy men.

My father explained to me that the Great Sanhedrin dealt with religious matters, criminal matters, trials of adulterous wives, tithes, preparation of Torah Scrolls for the Temple, drawing up the calendar and the solving of difficulties relating to ritual law. By our time the Great Sanhedrin had lost its authority to inflict capital punishment which was reserved to the Roman governor.

He said the Sanhedrin required a minimum of two witnesses to convict a suspect. There were no attorneys. Instead, the accusing witness stated the offense in the presence of the accused and the accused could call witnesses on his own behalf. The court questioned the accused, the accusers and the defense witnesses.

Temple Years

I did not know what to believe about these religious differences but I knew worshipping my God in the Temple was my duty and my joy. My parents told me it was time for them to honor their agreement with God. I was to live in the Temple for now – I was overjoyed to hear that – being cared for and instructed by a group of women and rabbis and priests with this assigned task. My joy turned to sadness when I realized I would be leaving my parents. They told me again this was God's will for me and for me not to be too sad since they were not returning to Nazareth and would be living in Jerusalem nearby. My father had decided to study to become a rabbi or teacher in a synagogue. I lived in the Temple grounds for the next seven years.

Education

I learned to read and write; my only book was the Bible. I knew girls growing up in ordinary homes did not receive the education we were getting, which was usually strictly reserved for boys. We were cared for by a group of women who had dedicated themselves to service in the Temple. One of my favorites was Anna who was very old and a prophet. She had been married for seven years but when her husband died, she

entered the Temple service. One of the other women said Anna had been in the Temple for 75 years which sounded like a very long time to me!

I loved to listen to our rabbis and priests telling us the history of the Chosen People and of the Temple, the dwelling place of our God, the place where all Jews worship Him, the underlying meaning of the longing expressed at Passover time by “Next year in Jerusalem!” Its centerpiece is a sacred rock, the very rock on which Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac at God’s command, prevented from doing so by an angel and rewarded as the one from whom would descend the chosen people, we Israelites. My learning of Jewish history began therefore with Abraham. My favorite teacher was an old rabbi named Simeon. He seemed to know something about me, he never said what it was but his eyes would fix on me when he talked about the Chosen People, so named by God since it would be to them He would send the Messiah, the One who would save them from their sins.

In our time, girls were not educated, were not taught to read the Bible and have its passages, prophecies, psalms and pre-figurings explained to them. But our little group was special, we were virgins consecrated to God. So, the priests and rabbis taught us to read the Bible and they explained everything to us.

We girls, I remember through the years my friends Miriam, Judith, Esther, Deborrah, Ruth, Naomi, Martha, Jael, Sarah, Merab, Micah, Abigail, Abital, Leah, Dinah, Hannah, Jemima, Joanna, Julia, Pricilla, Rebecca, Susanna, Tabitha - we took it in turns to read the Bible passages. Simeon and the other priests and rabbis explained the meaning of each story to us as we went along.

Meditation

Panel I

The Annunciation

1st Joyful Mystery: The Annunciation

My parents told me when they were growing old and without a child, they had promised God that if He gave them a child, the child would be dedicated to Him. Accordingly, I was sent to live in the Temple in Jerusalem from the age of five. But I left the Temple when I was 12 years old, forgoing the option to commit myself as an adult to Temple service for life, but first making a public vow of lifelong virginity and service to God. I returned to my parent's home at their request and with the priests' blessing. My mother, Anne, had fallen ill and was not recovering, so I was needed to look after her and my father. I did the cooking and cleaning, went to the well to draw water and to the market to buy food. My father or one of my male cousins accompanied me whenever I went out in public, as was our custom – no woman could venture outdoors alone unless accompanied by a male relative. My mother told me I had become a beautiful young woman in our years apart and she praised me for my devotion to our God.

We returned to live in Nazareth, the town of her birth. My father served as the rabbi to our synagogue. My mother died when I was 14 years old. It was a very sad day for my father and for me. According to our custom, we wrapped her body in a shroud sprinkled with myrrh and placed it on a bier. We sang the burial psalms over her. My father believed in the resurrection of the dead as did I and we knew we would see her again in the next life. The next day a flute-player and several wailing women led the funeral procession to our family cave where her body was placed on a shelf and the entrance sealed – all the villagers followed to honor her memory and to show respect to my father. My father tearfully recited verses from Proverbs over her entombed body.

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

The heart of her husband does safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

She rises also while it is yet night, and gives meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

She considers a field, and buys it: with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

*She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms.
She perceives that her merchandise is good: her candle goes not out by night.
She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.
She stretches out her hand to the poor; yea, she reaches forth her hands to the needy.
She opens her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.
Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.
Many daughters have done virtuously, but you excel them all.
Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that fears the Lord, she shall be
praised.*

My father never really recovered from the loss of his wife, whom he had loved deeply, his own health began to fail. Concerned for my future as an orphan he asked Joseph the carpenter to take me as his wife. Joseph was a good friend of my father's and my father knew him to be a virtuous and honorable man, kind to all and generous to widows and the poor. Joseph had three sons and a daughter, his wife having died some years before. Two of his sons were married, one had moved to Capernaum, a nearby town on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, the other lived in Nazareth and owned a vineyard. His daughter was married to the baker in Nazareth. The youngest son had departed for Jerusalem to study to be a rabbi, so his home was empty.

I knew Joseph from his visits to our home to speak with my father and I liked him, finding him to be handsome, joyful and sincere in nature. I knew I would have no say in whom my father chose to be my husband but I was happy with his choice and I knew I would come to love Joseph from whom I immediately felt security and affection. Joseph accepted me for his future wife, signed the ketubbah contract with my father and we were betrothed. My father wished for only a small dowry and our marriage was set for a year hence when I would be 15 years of age.

In the usual Jewish form of marriage, on the set date we would consummate the marriage at my home. I would wait with my maiden friends for the arrival of Joseph and his companions. We two would enter the chuppah room and consummate the marriage while our companions waited and celebrated outside. Joseph would hand the bloodied "proof of virginity cloth" to the witnesses chosen by my father, who would then give it to me for safekeeping. After the consummation, our wedding party would walk to Joseph's

house in a procession for a wedding feast. At the conclusion of the wedding feast, we would be married.

In other words, I knew the central requirement of the Jewish marriage was that the bride be a virgin and be publicly proved to be so. A future husband could refuse to conclude the marriage if his bride was found not to be a virgin. Since the betrothal lasted for over a year, during which the couple certainly did not have sexual relations, finding out his betrothed was not a virgin, worst still pregnant, would cause him great embarrassment and make him ask the question: “Who is the father of her child, who has done this wrongful deed to me?”

The angel came to me one day at noon about four months before our wedding was to take place. I was terrified at first, then filled with great peace and love for my God as I heard his words. His opening words were,

Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.

I wondered what on earth this sort of greeting meant. I soon found out. The angel, who said his name was Gabriel, said to me,

Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him

Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,

and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,

and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,

and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Could I believe my ears – Jesus means Savior, Messiah – to be my child! But more to the point, I had taken a vow to always be a virgin, I blurted out,

How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?

Gabriel replied,

The Holy Spirit will come upon you,

and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.

But in a strange way I was prepared for this moment, had been preparing for it all my life. I was scared but overjoyed and totally open to whatever God would have me do. I said,

Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.

May it be done to me according to your word.

Then the angel left me alone with my thoughts and my prayers. I needed someone to talk to, someone who might understand. The angel had given me a name.

2nd Joyful Mystery: The Visitation

I told Joseph my cousin Elizabeth was pregnant, even though her child bearing years were well beyond her. I asked whether I could visit her for the final months of her pregnancy. He did not hesitate, trusting totally in me. We departed the next day. Joseph accompanied me on the 80 miles to Jerusalem and then found a caravan to take me the final 20 miles to the village of Ain Karim in the mountains of Judea. I entered unannounced into the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard my greeting, she was inspired to cry out in a loud voice,

Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears,

the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord

would be fulfilled.

I was humbled that she knew my secret and felt the Holy Spirit inspiring me to reply, to recognize what it meant that God had chosen me, an insignificant 14-year old maiden from a tiny, obscure village, to be the mother of His Son Jesus, the promised Messiah.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;

my spirit rejoices in God my savior.

For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness;

behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.

The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name

His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him.

He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.

He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly.

The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy,

according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

I stayed with Elizabeth for the next three months until her son, John, was born. We shared our stories, thanking our God for His blessings, both embracing and dreading the future, somewhat warned by scripture, knowing deep in our hearts that our sons would suffer terrible things for the salvation of all of us.

My cousin told me her story: As you know, Mary, I was barren, we had no children and we were getting older, too old for it to happen now. Six months ago, my husband was serving as a Temple priest in his division's turn before God, he was overjoyed when he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense. Then, when the whole assembly of the people was praying outside at the hour of the incense offering, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right of the altar of incense. My poor Zachariah was troubled by what he saw, and really scared. But the angel said to him,

Do not be afraid, Zachariah, because your prayer has been heard.

Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John.

And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.

He will drink neither wine nor strong drink.

He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers toward children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare a people fit for the Lord.

But my beloved Zachariah doubted the Lord and said to the angel,

How can this possibly happen?

For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.

And the angel said to him in reply,

I am Gabriel, who stands before God.

I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news.

But now you will be speechless and unable to talk until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time.

Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zachariah and were amazed that he stayed so long in the sanctuary. But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they

realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He was gesturing to them but remained mute. Then, when his days of ministry were completed, he went home, we made love and I conceived, and went into seclusion for five months, saying,

So has the Lord seen fit to take away my disgrace before others.

My neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward me, and they rejoiced with me, and now you are here!

I was there for the birth of John and for his circumcision on the eighth day. The priest performing the ceremony said we will call him Zachariah after his father, but Elizabeth replied,

No. He will be called John.

But the priest said there is no one among your relatives who has this name, let's ask his father. So they made signs, asking Zachariah what he wished him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote,

John is his name,

and we were all amazed. Immediately Zachariah's mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. Then fear came upon all the neighbors, and they told us these matters were being discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. They wondered aloud,

What, then, will this child be?

for surely the hand of the Lord was with him.

Then Zachariah his father, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied, saying:

*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
for he has visited and brought redemption to his people.
And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give his people knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God*

I departed for Nazareth, knowing I was already pregnant and beginning to show. I did not see John again till much later in my life. Joseph and I would flee with our baby son to Egypt, Elizabeth fled with baby John to the hill country by the desert to avoid Herod's

slaughter of the innocent boys born around the time of Jesus. John grew up strong in spirit, lived mostly in the desert and did not leave it for almost 30 years.

A month before our wedding date, I returned to Nazareth in fear and trepidation but I trusted fully in God. I met Joseph at my request, my father by my side. I told him I was with child, not from human intercourse but by the Holy Spirit. He did not understand this at all – there is no precedent in all of human history. He was silent for a long time. But he did not judge me or condemn me although his heart was heavy and I felt very sad for him - I was pregnant and he knew he was not the father of my child. He told me he would conclude the betrothal privately and no-one need know of my condition. I could go away for a time, maybe back to my cousin's, until the child was born. I could then decide what my future might be. This scared me greatly but I had no explanation, not one that other human beings could understand. I just cried for his distress, thanked him for his goodness and went into seclusion in my father's house. I didn't know how, but I knew my God would protect me and His Son growing within my womb. My father kept his faith in me but he was bewildered and also by now very sick.

Joseph returned to meet with me the next day. His face was white with fear and amazement. He told me he had slept little the previous night but that he loved and cherished me, so he had again resolved, not wanting to disgrace me publicly, to send me away secretly. But as he lay in restless sleep, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying,

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.

He knew then, he told me, that our son would be the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of our people. He told me he recalled Isaiah's words,

*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign.
Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and you shall call his name Immanuel, God is with us."*

And so we were duly married. Joseph's daughter was my companion and Joseph's sons were his. Joseph had a brother called Cleophas who also lived in Nazareth and he

had a large family and they, and many of our friends, all came to our wedding feast. Joseph told his children that the wedding ceremony would be brief (but the wedding feast very festive) since it was not his first marriage and that the ritual of the proof of virginity need not be necessary. They accepted this, maybe believing their father was not able to have sexual relations any more.

But as my pregnancy progressed and it was obvious I was with child, clearly conceived before our marriage, many people came to know our secret. My faith in God survived these judgments and the gossip that surrounded them, but I lived a 15-year old girl's worst fear, I was pregnant before I was married. But I felt enormous pride in my husband's humility and faithfulness to me and to God. He stood by me and he stood by our God all through this difficult time, never once complaining or doubting.

As far as all our friends and relatives knew, except for my cousin Elizabeth, my child was Joseph's son. They assumed the baby had been conceived while we were still betrothed and he had to bear the shame and unspoken accusations of that, yet I knew a better and more honorable man never graced this earth.

My father died shortly afterwards. We entombed him alongside his wife, my mother. I was devastated and now an orphan, but Joseph was always my strong support. He accepted that I was a virgin, would always be a virgin, but he loved, cherished and protected me.

Panel II

Birth and Hidden Life of Jesus

3rd Mystery: The Birth of Jesus

The Roman soldiers came to our village a few months later and read a decree from the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus. We had to travel to our own city, Bethlehem, David's birthplace, to be registered for taxation. We closed up our home, joined a caravan and Joseph walked beside me as I sat on our donkey, since I was by now very pregnant and expecting to deliver the child any day.

Joseph could not find a room in the Bethlehem inn but the innkeeper took pity on my condition and said we could stay in the stable out back. I prepared a manger bed for a cradle from the straw and Joseph found a mid-wife to assist me. By now my labor pains had started. Joseph held my hand as the child was born, unable to help and suffering with great compassion the pain all true husbands do. When the baby came, my pains stopped and I was overcome with joy. The midwife made sure my baby was breathing, then dried and wrapped him in swaddling clothes to keep him warm. He cried and gurgled. When the afterbirth came, the midwife cut the cord and placed my God in my arms. There is no way to describe the incredible feeling I had at that moment. But He was also a baby and a hungry one and I placed Him to my breast to feed him. I could never have imagined the joy and delight that I felt – my God was my child.

Then a strange mysterious thing happened. God and His angels were also overjoyed that the Son of God had been born, a helpless little baby lying in poverty in a manger in a stable, kept warm by the breath of the animals around Him. A procession of shepherds started coming by our stable, saying they had been told by an angel that the savior, Christ the Lord, had been born that day in this stable in the town of Bethlehem. They had seen a multitude of angels in the heavens, praising God, singing,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to men of good will

so they decided to come and see the Child for themselves. They fell to their knees and worshipped Him. When they left, praising and glorifying God, they said they would spread the word around the region, that they had seen an angel and he said to them,

Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

I did not know what to make of all this. I thought constantly about these happenings, and many others that would come later, in the depths of my heart, keeping my own counsel. I knew even more at 15 years of age than I did in the Temple but I would learn much more and come to an even deeper awareness of my role in God's plan as I grew older and as my son grew old enough to be able to discuss the fulfillment of the prophecies with me.

4th Joyful Mystery: The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

We moved from the stable into a house once the census crowds departed. We asked one of the local priests I knew from my days in the Temple to circumcise our child on the eighth day and we named him Jesus as the angel had dictated. On the fortieth day we travelled the five miles to the Temple in Jerusalem, purchased a pair of turtle doves and gave them to the priest for the purification sacrificial ritual required of all Jews when a child is born.

Another strange event then happened. I saw my beloved Simeon coming towards us. He smiled at me, took my Jesus into his arms and blessed God, saying,

Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Joseph and I looked at one another, we were surprised and amazed at Simeon's words, but I recalled how he had often looked strangely at me those years before when he taught us the prophecies of the Messiah.

Simeon blessed us and said to me strange words that nevertheless chilled me to the bone.

Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

Then my dear old Anna, my very old, very revered Anna, came over and hugged me, saying to all the same message, thanking God for sending the Messiah, this Child.

After the sacrifice, Joseph and I returned with our child to our home in Bethlehem. Joseph had obtained work as a carpenter but it was not to last. The final strange event connected to Jesus's birth was about to happen, it's after effects were to be devastating.

One afternoon, a royal cavalcade arrived outside our little house. Three men, dressed in royal clothes, asked to see our child. They prostrated themselves before him and

offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Later they explained they were from a country far to our east. They had been following a star prophesied to lead them to a baby who would be the king of the Jews and of all nations, the promised Messiah. The star led them to Jerusalem where they met with King Herod and explained their mission. The mention of a baby who would be king terrified all who listened to them, they knew what Herod's reaction would be. Herod immediately assembled the chief priests and scribes and asked them where the prophecies said the Messiah would be born. They told him it was Bethlehem according to the prophecy,

And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.

The Magi told us that Herod spoke to them alone, asking the time when the star appeared. He then sent them to Bethlehem, asking them to find the child and return to tell him so that he might also come and do homage. They were very suspicious of his attitude and had been warned in a dream not to follow his wishes. Once they left Jerusalem, the star reappeared and led them to our home. They said they would return to their country by another route, avoiding Jerusalem and Herod.

Exile in Egypt

Joseph was very concerned about their story and he was right. That night, his angel reappeared and told him,

Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.

We were gone by morning, with just a few clothes and our donkey to carry the child. As we journeyed to Egypt, other travelers told us the terrible aftermath. When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the Magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the 2,000 boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi.

Helped by the gold the Magi had given us, for we had nothing else, we settled in a village in Egypt where there were other Jews and a synagogue. Joseph resumed his work as a carpenter and Jesus grew into a wonderful little boy, full of love and affection. He loved to watch his father at work and played with the wooden toys Joseph made for him. We stayed in Egypt for four years until Joseph was told by his angel in a dream,

*Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel,
for those who sought the child's life are dead.*

We recalled the words of the prophet,

Out of Egypt I called my son.

5th Mystery: The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple

Nazareth

When we reached Israel we were afraid to return to live in Bethlehem with a child of the age that matched the slaughter, it was too close to Jerusalem and Herod's son, Archelaus, whose reputation matched his father's. So, we went back to Nazareth, to the family home. Again, the prophecy was,

He shall be called a Nazorean.

It was beautiful to watch my baby grow, to crawl, to walk, to talk, to laugh, to smile. He was an ordinary little boy, out playing in the street with his friends whenever he could. Occasionally he would stumble, fall and skin his knee or elbow and come running in to me, tears streaming down his face. I would put some ointment on his injury, give him a hug, let him nestle his head into my shoulder until his breathing became normal, then smile as he would jump to his feet, calling "Thanks, Mother" over his shoulder and be off out the door to play again.

The Boy Jesus

It was even more wonderful to watch Jesus grow into a sturdy boy. He studied the Bible in the synagogue, learned to read and write Hebrew, played games with the other boys, did his chores for me, helped his father and learned the trade to become a carpenter himself. I knew he was the Son of God but he was also fully human. He did not use his being God to avoid the gradual maturing that all boys and young men pass through. He was quick at his lessons but he had to learn to read and write and become a carpenter just as any other boy would have had to do. I was pleased I was able to help him to read and write, given the education I had been privileged to receive.

He was aware that one day His Father would ask him to take up His mission, that of teaching, curing, revealing and ultimately sacrificing Himself but the realization of all of this came to him in his human mind at a gradual rate. What a 30-year old Son of God could barely cope with in his mind could not be borne by a 12-year old in his mind. I came to realize all this gradually, better able to help him prepare for the mission his Father had sent him on and joining him in its fulfillment. That said, all who met him knew he was special. The grace of God was upon him. As for Joseph and me, can you

imagine how we felt when we knelt as a family to pray, knowing the Son of God was leading us in praising and talking with our Father.

Lost in the Temple

Every year we travelled to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, the ceremony commemorating the Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt. The ceremony was family-centered, the meal reenacting the final meal each family ate before fleeing northwards to the Red Sea and God's miracle through Moses. So we went to Jerusalem as a large family, ourselves, Joseph's sons and daughter by his first marriage, their children and Cleopas, Joseph's brother, who had his own large family, his wife, several children of various ages and already, some grandchildren. Some of our friends and their families joined our caravan as well – robbers, rebels and the occasional arrogant Roman soldiers were a constant threat to small groups of pilgrims. We had some wagons and donkeys to carry our goods.

There were several boys around Jesus' age and he knew them all very well and they all got along well together and kept each other entertained. We saw little of them during the day as the caravan covered the 80 miles to Jerusalem, a journey taking a little over four days. In the evening we rounded up the boys, lighted camp fires and cooked the evening meal with much hilarity and good humor. Later we sang our prayers to God as a big group. We slept in the open under the stars.

When Jesus was 12 years old, we all went to Jerusalem for the Passover meal as usual. The journey to Jerusalem and the ceremonies passed uneventfully. On the fourth day we packed up, said our goodbyes and set off for Nazareth. As usual, the boys were everywhere, full of good spirits. It was not until our first evening stopover that we looked for Jesus to join us. The minutes passed, then an hour, we started to panic, rushing around, asking if anyone had seen him. They all said no, not today. They helped us search, he was nowhere to be found. We were devastated, we were the parents, the guardians, the carers of God's Son and we had lost Him! What if something bad had happened to Him?

As soon as we had enough light to travel by, we took our donkey and hurried back to Jerusalem. There were still crowds of pilgrims everywhere. It seemed hopeless. We asked everyone who would stop to hear us if they had seen a 12-year old boy, this tall,

dressed this way – but everyone was dressed this way! What else could we do? We could not separate, a married woman could not go alone in public, so Joseph and I continued the search together. We slept a few fitful hours at our friend's house each night and quickly resumed the search next morning. We continued our desperate search for three full days, praying constantly to God to help us, but He was strangely silent.

On the fourth day, both nearly in tears, we went to the Temple to pray. There was a commotion in the inner court. Joseph was allowed to enter. There was our son, surrounded by priests, scribes and scholars. One of them was explaining a scriptural passage to him, he was replying, amazing them with his understanding and even more by the questions he was asking. Joseph told me it was an incredible sight.

He came out to the Women's Court with Joseph. With tears in my eyes that he was safe, I felt like castigating him, but I knew Whose Son He really was, he had never done anything like this before. I merely said,

Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?

Behold, thy father and I have sought you sorrowing

He gave us a strange answer,

How is it that you sought me?

Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

The Young Man, Jesus

And that was it. Jesus willingly came back to Nazareth with us and we never questioned his obedience, he was a model son. I could only surmise that he was a typical boy passing through puberty and seeking his independence. His divine nature knew God had a mission for Him and in his human nature he wanted to get on with it. But another 18 years would pass before that day would come. He continued his lessons with the rabbi and his insights continued to amaze that poor man, he had no idea who he was dealing with.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

Joseph taught Jesus the carpentry trade and together they made a formidable team. For the next ten years our life was very ordinary. Jesus spent his spare time with his stepbrothers and cousins and their families, helping them with any difficulties that came their way. He often went the few miles to Capernaum where he would watch the

fishermen at work and occasionally take a trip with them out onto the Sea of Galilee. He made many friends in both Nazareth and Capernaum and in some of the small villages nearby. One of his friends got in with the wrong crowd and joined in a robbery. The soldiers caught up with his gang and they were imprisoned in the jail at Capernaum. Jesus would visit him and bring him food and talk to him about his wrong decisions. The other prisoners also came to look forward to his visits and the wise counsel of one so young.

He was particularly concerned for the widows and orphans in the surrounding towns and he helped them through many small crises, made sure they had enough food and clothes, fetched water for them from the village well, joined his father in doing any repairs or upkeep on their houses and asked either another village woman or me to care for them when they were ill. He always made strangers welcome and I was pleased when he invited those in obvious want to join us for our evening meal. Occasionally a Roman soldier would intercept him on the road and demand his right that any Jew should carry his goods a mile for him. Jesus surprised them by carrying the goods an extra mile with a smile on his face. Occasionally he would accompany a shepherd out into the country side and help look after the sheep and goats. If one strayed, he would always volunteer to leave the flocks and go and find the lost animal, he loved the outdoors and helping the lost and those in need.

Later generations will read the prophesied *Judgment of the Nations*. I will sit beside Him on this judgment day, having through the ages taken every opportunity to help each individual person to know and love God - but not everyone will be saved.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him.

*And he will separate them one from another,
as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.*

He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the king will say to those on his right,

'Come, you who are blessed by my Father.

Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him and say,

'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?

When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?

When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?'

And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (for you did not do such deeds).

And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.'

My beloved Joseph died peacefully in his sleep. Jesus and I prepared his body for entombment, prayed the burial psalms over his body and tearfully walked in the funeral procession behind the piper and the wailing women to our family tomb. We would miss him terribly on earth but we knew God had a special place in heaven for the man who had so faithfully and humbly served Him and been a loving human father to His Son and a devoted husband to the virgin mother of His Son. No other man would have accepted without any doubts, constant divine intervention in his life and been required to have undoubting faith in God through the mystery surrounding my pregnancy, the birth of Jesus amid shepherds, angels, kings and prophesying old temple dwellers, the flight into Egypt and the loss of the 12-year old Jesus for three long days. God had chosen the perfect man to be my husband and the protector and provider for my son and myself.

The next eight years passed quickly. Each year we went with the family to Jerusalem to our friend's house for the Passover. Each year Jesus seemed to me to grow a little more restless. But he continued his work as a carpenter, and in his spare time, his deeds for those in need. Then the word began to spread of the crowds flocking to the Jordan to be baptized by his cousin, John, and of the things John was saying about the Messiah.

Panel III

The Baptism of Jesus

The Beginning of His Public Life

1st Luminous Mystery: The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan

John the Baptist

Jesus discussed John's mission with me. He reminded me of Isaiah's prophecy,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness

Prepare ye the way of the Lord

Make straight His paths.

He told me about the conversations he was having with people who had been to the Jordan to hear John talk and to be baptized by him in the Jordan. They said that when people asked what should they do to prepare, John replied, if you have two coats, give one to a person who has none; like-wise with meat and food. He was telling the publicans who collected taxes for the Romans to exact no more than they should; to the soldiers of Herod and the Romans, to not do violence to any man or accuse anyone falsely and to be content with their wages. He had a message for all.

My son told me that many people were wondering if John was the Messiah, the Christ. But John always replied vehemently, "I am not He. I only baptize you with water, but one mightier than I is coming, I am not worthy to tie his sandals, He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

So, Jesus and I went to visit his cousin. Jesus took his turn to be baptized by John in the river and then a mysterious event occurred. A spirit took possession of my son and we all heard a voice from the clouds saying,

This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

I knew then that our days of waiting were over. My son's mission was soon to begin. I felt both relief and apprehension.

We heard John cry out,

This is he of whom I said:

He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.

I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'

I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

Jesus left me then and I stayed on with John and his followers who included a number of women, some of whom I knew from Capernaum. Jesus went further into the desert and was gone for almost six weeks. He wanted to prepare his human nature for the mission His Father had sent Him to do. He told me later what happened. Satan was beginning to realize that this young man might well be the Messiah, and in that case, his eternal enemy. So, Jesus, supported by the Holy Spirit, was allowed by God to endure his temptations. But first Jesus was to be weakened humanly, he ate nothing for 40 days. Then Satan came to tempt him, asking him to prove he was the Son of God. Could he turn stones into bread? Jesus flicked that one away contemptuously. Did he want to be the emperor of all the kingdoms of the earth, if so, just kneel before me; Jesus replied that only his Father is to be worshipped, certainly not Satan. To see his divine nature reveal Itself, Satan wanted It to save his human body from death by telling Jesus to throw himself off the highest point of the Temple. Jesus replied, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." Frustrated, Satan left him for the present. Jesus returned to the Jordan where John was continuing his mission of preparing the crowds for the coming of the Messiah.

The First Disciples

The next day I saw my son recruit his first disciples. Jesus was walking past John when we heard John say to his followers, "Look, there is the lamb of God," so two of his followers took off after us. Jesus turned around and said, "What do you want?" They answered, "Rabbi, where do you live?" So Jesus said, "Come and see." One of these young men was called Andrew and once he found where we were staying, he immediately went off to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah." So, Simon came to meet my son and I could tell Jesus was really pleased to have him as a disciple, immediately renaming him Peter, the rock.

It just snow-balled from there. We were going back to Galilee but first we saw Phillip who came from the same town as Peter and Andrew and Jesus immediately recruited him, saying, "Follow me." Then Phillip detoured and recruited Nathaniel. Jesus told him he knew he had been found resting under a fig tree. Nathaniel was amazed and said, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the king of Israel." Jesus told him he would experience many things much greater than being told about the fig tree. I found out later

that all these young men came from the Capernaum region and that Jesus knew many of them already. They had all heard John saying the Messiah was coming and they wanted to follow whoever that turned out to be. Peter was married and his wife was accompanying him, so there were seven of us on the journey back to Galilee.

John continued to preach his message. But a few months later he publicly reprimanded King Herod for taking his brother's wife, Herodias, to be his mistress, as well as for all the many other wicked things which Herod had done. Herod became angry and he had John locked up in prison for months.

We found out that a year later, on Herod's birthday, Herodias's daughter, Salome, danced before the king and his guests. Her dancing pleased Herod so much that in his drunkenness he promised to give her anything she desired, up to half of his kingdom. When the daughter asked her mother what she should request, Herodias, still seething from John's public exposure of her infidelity and adultery, told Salome to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Although Herod was appalled by the request, he reluctantly agreed and had John executed.

I thought back to that day 30 years ago when I visited Elizabeth and she said "The child in my womb leaped for joy." I cried for her son. Like Jesus, he escaped the slaughter of newborn babies ordered by Herod the Great but he was not able to survive the wrath of Herod's son, Archelaus. As for Jesus, when he heard this terrible news, he was devastated. He went off into the desert to be alone, to get away from the crowds and pray to his Father.

2nd Luminous Mystery: The Wedding at Cana

Jesus begins his mission

At some stage, Jesus would have been prompted to commence His divine mission on a full-time basis, maybe I jump-started him. By now Jesus had a following of young men who were attracted to his person and his insights into scripture and human nature but he had not left home or his work as a carpenter.

There was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, a village a little over a mile from our home. I was there to help and both Jesus and his friends were invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out, I said to him,

Son, they have no wine.

And Jesus said to me,

Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.

But I simply said to the servants,

Whatever he says to you, do it.

Now there were six stone, 20-gallon water-pots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, the washing of hands and feet before a meal. Jesus said to them,

Fill the water pots with water.

So they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them,

Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.

So they took it to him. When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now."

This was the beginning of His mission, His being God began to manifest itself and His disciples began to believe in Him. After this he went down to Capernaum with myself, Joseph's children who were his brothers and sister, and his disciples; and we stayed there a few days in the house of my stepson, Jesus' half-brother. Then we all went to Jerusalem for the Passover. One of John's followers was a very wealthy young man but a

reluctant full-time disciple. He had a large house in Jerusalem and we were invited to stay there. This proved to be the first of many times.

Clearing the Temple

We went to the Temple first. I remembered how appalled I was as a little girl with all the noise and activity created by the merchants selling goods and changing money. It was most inappropriate for God's House. Jesus did not hesitate. He made a whip and drove them all out of the Temple, overturning their tables and scattering their goods. We were all delighted! But the authorities were surprised and asked him to justify his authority to do this. It was the first of many times Jesus gave an answer I understood but no one else did, at least not until after his death. He said,

Destroy this sanctuary and in three days I will rebuild it!

It was clear to me that Jesus did not trust any of these people, he knew them for who they were.

After the Passover we went back to the Jordan since Jesus's followers wanted to continue John's mission of baptizing and preparing for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus was happy to allow them to do this. But soon they were drawing even larger crowds that John did and attracting the attention of the Pharisees, so Jesus said,

Let's leave this for now.

Samaria

We continued our journey north through Samaria, but there he really surprised us. We went into a Samaritan town to buy food, leaving Jesus by the town well. There, he met a young Samaritan woman, and, unbelievably, he started a conversation with her. Unbelievably, first, because young, unattached men simply did not chat with young, unaccompanied women; and second, she was a Samaritan and Jews simply did not mix with Samaritans. Even worse, when we returned it was quickly obvious she was a woman of ill-repute, married five times by now, and she was both flirtatious and cheeky. But Jesus had convinced her he knew all about her, he knew her whole story. She was amazed and hurried back to town to tell everyone she met about him. Soon a big crowd came out and, again surprisingly, Jesus agreed to stay and talk to them, we were there for two whole days – Jews made welcome in a Samaritan town!

Final Time in Nazareth

We returned to Nazareth. It was to be for the last time. Jesus taught on the Sabbath in various synagogues in the surrounding villages and everyone praised him, but when he taught in our local synagogue, the people rejected him. They said, “How can the son of Joseph the carpenter presume to teach us and to know all these things?” Jesus challenged them even more, so they became an angry mob, trying to throw him off the cliff by the village. But he just seemed to disappear in the confusion. We went to Capernaum.

3rd Luminous Mystery: The Good News of the Kingdom of God

Mission Expands

Now his time had really come. First came a succession of miracles, including the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, hundreds of other healings, miraculous catches of fish, cures of lepers and paralytics, expulsions of devils. We were followed by huge crowds wherever we went. Soon Jesus had a large following of young men who wanted to be his disciples, convinced he was the Messiah foretold by John the Baptist. Most of them came from Capernaum and the nearby villages around the Sea of Galilee. So Jesus chose twelve to be his closest disciples, calling them from their fishing boats and their places of work, one was even a tax collector – that raised a few eyebrows. They were the brothers Simon Peter and Andrew, the brothers James and John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew the tax collector, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas the son of James and Judas Iscariot. The Twelve were to be Jesus' constant companions over the next three years. I went everywhere with them and several other women accompanied us, helping with all their needs.

Pharisees and Sadducees growing Enmity

The Pharisees and Sadducees were by now very concerned about Jesus and the huge crowds that followed him. It became common knowledge that they were out to stop him and that Jerusalem was a very dangerous place for him to go to. But he went anyway for the Feast of Tabernacles, keeping a low profile for a few days, listening to the people who stood in groups whispering about him, "He is a good man", "No, he is leading the people astray." But all the people were afraid of the Sanhedrin and its cohorts. Then my Son went to the Temple and began to teach. The people were amazed, where did his teaching come from? And, "Isn't this the man they want to kill. And here he is speaking freely and they have nothing to say to him. Can it be true they have made up their minds he is the Christ? Yet we all know where he comes from, but when Christ appears no one will know where he comes from."

He challenged them, as always,

Yes, you know me and where I come from.

Yet I have not come of myself:

No, there is one who sent me and I really come from him,

And you do not know him,

But I know him

And it was he who sent me.

On the last day of the festival he stood up and cried out,

If any man is thirsty, let him come to me!

As scripture says, From his breast shall flow fountains of living water.

I stood watching in fear and trepidation but still no one laid a hand on him. Not even when the Pharisees stood before him as he exclaimed,

I am the light of the world;

Anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark;

He will have the light of life.

Hundreds of people from the countryside listened to him speak whenever he came to Jerusalem. But always they stayed quiet, the Sanhedrin police were everywhere. Yet when he left Jerusalem for Galilee or the other side of the Jordan, they followed him in droves, hanging on his every word, they were convinced he was the Messiah.

The high point came a few days before my son's last Passover in Jerusalem. The crowd followed him into Jerusalem and they put on quite a show. They took branches of palm and led him in procession, shouting,

Hosanna, blessings on the king of Israel who comes in the name of the Lord.

The disciples put Jesus on a young donkey and he rode into Jerusalem like royalty with the people scattering their palms before him. We could see the Pharisees muttering and looking at one another, helpless in the face of this joyful, worshipping crowd. They knew they would have to take him quietly, by stealth.

And when they did capture him and quickly condemn him, they had the upper hand. They allied with the Roman governor and his soldiers. To a man, to a woman, all who had joined in Jesus' triumphal entry in Jerusalem just a few days before, all deserted him, no one spoke in his defense, they were all too scared for their lives.

Panel IV

The Good Shepherd

The Crowds

Thousands of people heard my Son speak, to hear ‘I am the Good Shepherd’, to witness many of the hundreds of miracles he performed; smaller groups heard other words and saw other miracles; his close followers, both men and women, saw much more and took part in both the spreading of the word and doing miracles. The twelve apostles were given a much more thorough teaching and the opportunity to learn close up that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah.

I could tell the crowds were often left at a loss to understand what Jesus was saying, particularly when he taught them in parables. When Jesus healed the sick, generally only those close by could actually witness what had happened. Often it was hard for many people to hear what my Son was saying, even though he had a powerful voice.

After the wedding at Cana, Jesus started preaching in the synagogues in Galilee. He attracted a huge following wherever he went. The first time he preached to a big outdoor crowd was on the water from Simon’s boat. This was before Simon became a full-time disciple and be renamed Peter. His voice carried easily over the water and so he often chose this way of speaking to a crowd. When sunset came, he went on land and the crowd brought many, many sick people to him and he cured them all.

When the disciple, Matthew, once a tax collector, wrote his story of my son’s life, he came to me to discuss various details. Later the young disciple, John, would do the same but he would have much more time to spend with me, remembering and interpreting what had happened. Matthew wrote,

He went around the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people.

His fame spread throughout Syria and those who were suffering from diseases and painful complaints of one kind or another, the possessed, the epileptics, the paralyzed, were all brought to him and he cured them.

Large crowds followed him, coming from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and Transjordan.

Jesus loved teaching in parables, using events in everyday life to illustrate profound truths. Later he would talk more about these matters to the disciples and us women. We

understood the message of the parables of the sower, the mustard seed, the yeast, the treasure, the pearl of great price, the net cast into the sea, the lost sheep, the lamp, the Good Samaritan and many more. The disciples asked for explanations, the crowds were left to ponder. It was obvious to me that the crowds would be given much less than the Twelve from whom he expected so much more, in particular, they would be expected to continue his legacy by forming his Church, his kingdom on earth.

After his sermons, he would feed the whole crowd with just the few fish and loaves of bread the disciples could garner from the crowd. Then they would bring the sick to Jesus and he would heal them.

So, in the rural areas, Jesus mostly had a wonderful relationship with the crowds. They revered him and hung on his every word. But it was different in Jerusalem which was firmly under the control, in religious matters, of the Sanhedrin, the priests, the Pharisees, the scribes and the lawyers. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were terrified of offending these controlling groups, the pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for the festivals were less concerned.

No backing down

When we next went to Jerusalem, Jesus again kept a low profile for a few days, listening to what people were saying about him. We heard the same comments, the crowd opinions were still divided, “He is a good man” versus “No, he is leading the people astray.” But it was all said in whispers, clearly the people were terrified of the Sanhedrin and its cohorts. Jesus told us not to be surprised and not to be scared.

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth;

I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I came to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

and a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.

Then he went into the Temple and began to teach. There would be no safe haven for us in all of Israel. Some crowds would protect us, others not, the mood varied day by day.

I now fully realized why my son had kept so much hidden from the crowd of his supporters, and had not spent most of his time trying to teach them. He knew they would

not be strong enough in faith to withstand the power of the Sanhedrin allied with Rome. He never assumed that after his death, he would leave behind thousands of devoted followers, but he had prepared the way for their conversion and salvation. He had devoted most of his time to teaching the Twelve, they would be his legacy, albeit an unreliable and shaky one at first.

The Twelve: Early days

All of Jesus' first disciples came to him from his cousin, John. They were simple men, all young and all from Galilee, mostly Capernaum on the shore of the sea of Galilee and the surrounding villages. They were men of faith, looking for the Messiah. They came to John by the Jordan because he was telling everyone that he was preparing the way for the Messiah. Then, when Jesus came to be baptized, they heard the voice from heaven, they heard what John said, they readily followed Jesus. But he was returning to Galilee so they all went home with him and resumed their normal lives, spending time with Jesus when he was around.

The brothers Peter and Andrew, and the brothers James and John, sons of Zebedee, were all invited to the wedding in Cana, so they saw Jesus' first miracle. They came with us to Jerusalem and saw my son clear the Temple of all the merchants and money changers. They went with him back to the Jordan and continued John's work of baptizing, telling everyone that the Messiah was coming. Maybe they wondered why not, but I knew my son was not going to join in this level of baptism, nor was he ready to explain himself fully to them at this early stage.

But he did start to reveal his divine nature to them. We settled in Capernaum, Jesus expelled a demon from a man in the synagogue, he cured Peter's mother-in-law, he preached in the synagogues around, he healed many people each evening by the sea. Then, one afternoon, he once again asked Peter to take him offshore so he could speak to the large crowd following him, and, that done, to put out to sea and lower his nets. Peter argued they had been fishing all day and caught nothing, Jesus said, "Just do it!". So they did and the nets became so full of fish they struggled to get them to shore. Yes, I saw the early disciples gradually coming to realize that Jesus was no ordinary man, not even a man especially blessed by God, no, something, somebody, much more than that.

By now they were joined by Matthew and Thomas and they devoted themselves full-time to following Jesus. Some women, myself included, journeyed with them to help provide their needs, buying food, cooking, cleaning, finding places to sleep. We were surprised to be joined by Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. She told us she had witnessed Herod's treatment of John the Baptist and had become disillusioned with both Herod and her husband's support of him. There were also some women who had been healed by Jesus of evil spirits and sicknesses and many others who were contributing to our support out of their private means. As I got to know them, I learned their stories too.

Mary Magdalen

When Jesus was in his late 20's, we went to Jerusalem to celebrate a feast day. On the way we passed through the village of Bethany which is about 2 miles from Jerusalem. A woman who lived there noticed how hot and tired we were and invited us into her house to drink and rest. We actually stayed the night there. Her name was Martha. She was about 27 years old and had never married. Eventually she told us why not. Her parents, who were quite wealthy, had died at an early age, leaving her to care for her then 18-year old sister, Mary, and 20-year old brother, Lazarus. Both her sister and her brother caused her great grief. The boy was sickly and needed constant care. The girl was wayward, mixing with the wrong crowd, following the caravans from India laden with opium, hemp and alcohol as they passed through Judea. Martha often had to rescue her from a bad situation, she feared the worst for her sister.

Whenever we passed through Bethany we always visited Martha, we got to know Lazarus, but we saw nothing of Mary. Martha said she spent most of her time in the town of Magdala and so was going by the name, Mary Magdalen.

After the miracle at Cana, the next time we went to Jerusalem, we again passed through Bethany. This time there was a young girl lying by the roadside. She was barely covered, dirty, foaming at the mouth, mumbling curses, wide-eyed, clearly under the influence of something and she smelled really bad. But in a brief moment of normalcy, she lifted her head and met Jesus' eyes and seemed to beg him to help her. He stopped by her, took her by the hand and commanded her demons to leave her, saying this seven times. She shook and trembled, then collapsed in a heap. Jesus lifted her up just as Martha was coming to meet us. She cried out, "Mary!" We knew then who she was.

Martha thanked us, took her sister into her arms and carried her home to clean, dress and feed her. The thought “prodigal son, prodigal daughter” flashed through my mind.

On our return from Jerusalem we were met by Simon who was a Pharisee and thought he could get the better of this young upstart. He invited Jesus to come and dine with him and so we accepted. We had not been sitting at the far end of the table for long when a pretty, well-dressed 22-year old girl forced her way into the house. She prostrated herself at Jesus’ feet, tears streaming down her face. She washed his feet with her tears, dried them with her long, flowing hair, took out a jar of alabaster ointment and anointed them, raised her face to look at him, then left.

Jesus knew who she was and so did all present. Simon thought this was a good time to launch his attack. So he criticized Jesus to the whole table for allowing a woman, and maybe he knew Mary’s reputation as well, any woman, to act this way publicly with an unmarried man. But Jesus simply sighed, then got to the heart of the matter as he so often did, saying to Simon, when I entered your house you did not offer me even basic courtesy, no water to wash my hands and feet, no proper greeting of a guest, no place of honor, yet this woman washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair and anointed them with ointment, treating me like royalty. Surely she is more worthy of my thanks than you are! So, obviously unwelcome, we left Simon’s house and found Mary was waiting outside to thank Jesus for saving her and to take us to her home.

Martha was preparing a meal when we reached their house. I began to help her but Mary went and sat on her knees by Jesus’s feet and listened to him talking in little parables and explaining what they meant. Martha did not think this was appropriate, certainly it was without precedent in Judea that a girl would be instructed by a teacher, and, I suppose, Martha was a little tired of looking after her siblings, so she asked Jesus to tell Mary to come and help us with preparing the meal. But Jesus chose Mary’s part, saying,

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things;

but only one thing is necessary,

for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

A few months later Mary Magdalen joined our group of women on a fulltime basis. I often noticed her looking at Jesus and soon realized she was not only devoted to the man

who had rescued her from her demons and life in the gutter, but she absolutely loved him as only a woman can love a man. And, she was extremely pretty, growing more beautiful every day. Jesus, of course, noticed her attention, after all he was fully a man, but He was also God.

So I chaperoned them and walked with them into a private place, then left them alone for a while. Mary Magdalen told me later the essence of their conversation. She told Jesus she was madly in love with him and asked did she have a chance of winning his affection. Jesus was very gentle with her, clearly as a man he loved her too. But he told her that the fact that he had been able to dismiss her demons, let alone all the other miracles she was witnessing, let alone the way he spoke to the crowds and to the Twelve, all of these things were signs that he was not an ordinary person. He quoted her a little of the prophecies, telling her indirectly that he was the Messiah, sent by God to redeem the human race by his sacrificial death. She told him she understood this, but really she didn't have a clue at this early stage, she just wanted to be with him. I walked back to our group with them, no more words were spoken.

Later Mary came to me in tears. She always called me "Mother" as did he. She sobbed in my arms, crying out, "Mother, what am I to do? I love him. Why can't he love me the same way?" So, I told her the story of the Angel Gabriel visiting me, of Jesus' birth, of the shepherds and the angels, the wise men and the star, Herod and the slaughter, the flight and Egypt and of how my husband protected us, advised by his angel. She listened wide-eyed, stopped her crying, dried her tears and drew a deep breath. "So, is he God's son?" she said. I just looked at her. Then a strong resolve came over her face. I knew she would never stop loving him in the man-woman sense but I also knew, that to complement me, he would have no stronger ally in his mission than this young girl and that she would never again pressure him. When I looked at my son the following day, I knew he would never stop loving her either, she was special to him, but his Father's mission came first.

A few days later a woman in the crowd called out to Jesus,

Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed.

But Jesus replied,

On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.

Mary looked at me and smiled. I smiled back, we were on the same page over that one!

After that, Mary Magdalen was by Jesus' side whenever and wherever possible. In the final days, she came with us into Jerusalem in the triumphal procession, led us back to her house in Bethany for the final four days, helped prepare for the last Passover, listened to his final words to the apostles, watched as he was arrested in the Garden of Olives, stood in the courtyard as he was convicted and tortured, followed him as he dragged his cross to Calvary, stood beneath his cross as he suffered and died, anointed his body for entombment, sat by the tomb for two nights and a day. Like the veil of the Temple, her heart was torn in two, but I knew my Son would look after her.

The Schooling of the Disciples

My son was a true Jew. He attended services in the synagogue each Sabbath and worshipped in the Temple whenever he was in Jerusalem, especially for the Passover. But he knew that the services and worship His Father desired were not to be these, their time was done. As he said to the crowds, he came to fulfil the Law and the prophets. So he did things which scandalized the sanctimonious Pharisees. He healed a man in the Temple on the Sabbath – surely that is work, they said, God's work, he replied. And his disciples picked grain on the Sabbath and he had to defend them against the Pharisees, saying they over-burdened people with all their trivial laws and rules. Then he healed a man's hand on the Sabbath, more illegal work! All of this his disciples saw and thought about. But they agreed with him it was time to get out of Jerusalem and away from the Sanhedrin and its police force.

We went back to Galilee, thousands followed, carrying their sick to be healed. Over the next few days, Jesus culled his disciples' number. He chose the Twelve for his special attention, then a larger group of more than 100 to help him.

He went to a flat area, above him was a natural amphitheater. He sat down and the Twelve, the other followers and we women all sat around and above him. He said these beautiful poetic words,

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

He continued to teach the Twelve for some hours, then went down the mountain and cured the sick brought to him. For the second time we saw him cure a Gentile, in this case the servant of a Roman centurion! Over the next few weeks he raised two dead people to life, first the son of a widow from Nain, second, the daughter of Jairus. Then he dined with a Pharisee! He was giving his disciples plenty to think about and discuss among themselves.

My son's schooling of his close circle of disciples was a mix of parables and miracles. The crowds heard the parables but only the disciples heard them explained, what was meant by the parables of the sower, the weed planted by an enemy, the mustard seed, the yeast, the treasure buried in a field. He explained to the Twelve that these were all similes for the kingdom of heaven which was coming to them and he gave a detailed explanation of each one. When the Twelve asked why the crowds did not get the explanations, Jesus said,

The reason I talk to them in parables is that they look without seeing and listen without hearing or understanding.

But happy are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear!

I agreed that too many in the crowd came to be entertained, to say, "Wow!" It was like a circus for too many, they had no faith. Even many of those cured showed no thanks, certainly no belief. They were mesmerized by my son's words, but had little idea what he meant and really didn't mind that, he was just 'different'.

I smiled, when, like a good teacher, he checked with the Twelve to see if they understood his explanations of each parable. They glowed when he praised them.

He told me it was time to see if they could help him with the ever-growing crowds for whom he felt pity, ‘Like sheep without a shepherd’, he said to me. His role as the Good Shepherd needed support. So, he called the Twelve together and gave them authority to cast out demons and to heal all kinds of diseases and sickness. Then, he sent them out with clear instructions to preach and to heal. But he certainly was not naïve, saying,

I am sending you out as sheep among wolves, so be cunning as serpents and yet as harmless as doves.

Panel V

The Feeding of the Followers of Jesus

The Food That Comes Down from Heaven

The Twelve: Middle Times

The disciples returned a few weeks later, they were tired but elated with the success of the message they had preached and with all the miracles they had performed. Many more people now knew the good news of the coming of the Messiah, the whole country was abuzz. So, we all went off into the hills to debrief and to rest, there were so many people gathering around us, demanding our attention, that we had no time to eat. But we were not alone for long, they quickly found us again. Jesus talked to them from a hillside and then, noticing they were as hungry as we were, he fed us all, 5,000 men as well as women and children, fed us with just five loaves and two fish and even then the baskets used to distribute the food were still overflowing.

Jesus told me it was time to test the faith of the Twelve, how much faith did they really have even after their incredible experiences over the past few weeks. And it was time for him to reveal more of his divinity. He sent them all by boat across the sea to Bethsaida. But the wind was strong in their faces, the sails useless and the oars not much better. John told me he came walking on the water and passed them by. They were terrified, a ghost they thought, nothing clicked that Jesus could do this. He had to call out to them and say, "Courage, it is I." Then Peter, aspiring to be their leader, said doubtfully, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water." "Come", said my Son. Peter gingerly lowered himself out of the boat, took a few timid steps then panicked and began to sink, crying, "Save me!". Jesus immediately held out his hand, but then, sadly we both knew some lonely times were ahead of us, they would be of little help in a crisis, "Oh, ye of little faith", haven't you remembered anything, gained anything, any faith, from the last few weeks?

They would have a chance to redeem themselves. Their faith and the faith of all the other 72 plus close followers was about to be tested in a totally different way.

Jesus was about to reveal the most controversial thing about his mission from the Father. Later he would predict his death and his rising from the dead, the essential events for the Messianic redemption, but the crowds had seen him raise others from the dead, they could deal with this kind of language, however, what they were about to hear was to many, simply outrageous and unbelievable.

4th Luminous Mystery: The Transfiguration

The Bread of Life

When we came ashore on the other side of the lake, the crowd was waiting, they had hurried around the shore. Jesus quickly picked the reason for their haste,

*You are not looking for me because you have seen the signs,
but because you had all the bread (and fish) you wanted to eat.*

He told them to work instead for food that would last, for food that endures to eternal life, so, of course, they asked how they could get such bread. Then came the bombshell.

*I am the bread of life
He who comes to me will never be hungry
He who believes in me will never thirst*

***...

*I am the living bread which has come down from heaven,
Anyone who eats this bread will live forever
And the bread that I will give
Is my flesh, for the light of the world.
I tell you most solemnly,
If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man
And drink his blood,
You shall not have life in you.*

*My flesh is real food
And my blood is real drink
He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood
Lives in me
And I in him.*

I was very sad as I watched the fragile faith of not just the crowd, but many of his close followers, shatter. They muttered among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”, and many drifted away, never to return.

Jesus did not back off, he was demanding absolute faith.

Does this upset you?

What if you should see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before?

The Son of God is revealed

Then came the Twelve's finest hour. When Jesus asked them whether they too would go away, Simon Peter said to him,

*Lord who shall we go to,
You have the message of eternal life,
and we believe,
We know that you are the holy one of God.*

Our life continued along familiar lines, a series of miracles, again one to a Gentile, a deaf man cured, a blind man cured on the Sabbath, constant sightings of the sly Pharisees, huge crowds and Jesus preaching to them, then feeding them, again once as many as 4,000 men, plus women and children. Peter was becoming more and more convinced, and when Jesus asked the Twelve who people were saying he was, then who they thought he was, Peter summoned up courage and said to Jesus,

You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God

I could see my son was overwhelmed. He gave Peter a hug, blessed him and said,

*You are Peter, the rock, and upon this rock I will build my Church
And the gates of hell can never hold against it
I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,
Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven
And whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven*

But I knew my son was not yet ready to reveal his divine nature and messianic mission to anyone other than the Twelve and the women who followed him. He gave the Twelve strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Transfiguration

But He was ready to reveal His divinity, at least to Peter and the brothers James and John. John told me later what happened. Six days later the four of them went up a mountain and there He was transfigured before them, His face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as light, then Moses and Elijah appeared and were talking with Him, and a voice came from heaven,

This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, Listen to him!

The three apostles were terrified and collapsed onto their knees. Surely, Jesus told me later, their faith would now be strong enough to cope with what lay ahead! I hoped he was right.

Pay attention

He now started to prepare the Twelve for his death, I shuddered to hear him tell them,

The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men,

They will put him to death;

And after three days he will rise again.

I could tell they had no idea what he was talking about and were afraid to ask him. But, pumped up with their own success, they were not afraid to start arguing among themselves as to who was the greatest, the best preacher, the best miracle worker. We were on our way to Capernaum and when we got there, Jesus asked them what they were arguing about, eyes down all round! So, Jesus put a little child on his knee and told them about humility and simplicity, making it clear that if anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servants of all.

Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Some people are slow learners! The mother of James and John asked to speak with Jesus and she asked him to promise her that her two sons would sit on his left and right hand when he came into his kingdom. But Jesus told her and her two sons they did not know what they were asking for, in any case, such favors were not his to grant, although he looked at me and smiled as he said this. Then a storm broke loose, the other apostles were angry beyond belief at the audacity and presumptuousness of the sons of Zebedee. But Jesus reminded them all that if they wanted to be the greatest, they must first be the servant of all. I could see they didn't like that message too much, but they quietened down.

The Twelve: Final Days

We all felt much safer in Galilee but the Feast of Tabernacles was drawing near, so we went to Jerusalem, our hearts in our mouths. The constant stress was positive in one

sense, it was banding the apostles closer together. We soon found out that the people were afraid to talk openly about Jesus. He again told us that some were seeking to kill him, we knew who they were!

When Jesus began to preach publicly, the Sanhedrin police were quick to find us. They stood and watched, listened to him and to the people discussing who he was. They were afraid to arrest him publicly and went back and told the Sanhedrin why not, saying, “There has never been anyone who spoke like this.” The Sanhedrin scorned their answer, “The rabble knows nothing about the Law, they are damned,” but they were too scared to do their own dirty work.

Nicodemus, Jesus’ only Pharisee friend, told me later he tried to defend Jesus, at least to ensure he had a fair trial before being condemned, but they scorned him also, “Prophets do not come out of Galilee.”

The preaching, parables and miracles continued. I loved the parable of the Good Shepherd and knew where Jesus had drawn that from! The healing of a blind beggar created a storm of criticism from the Pharisees, the aftermath of the Good Shepherd parable even more so, again dividing the crowd into those for and those against.

I am the Good Shepherd,

The good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep;

The Father loves me because I lay down my life in order to take it up again,

No one takes it from me, I lay it down of my own free will.

Not for the first time I winced to hear some say, he is possessed, he is raving, why bother to listen to him. But others, including the Twelve, defended him, saying these are not the words of a man possessed by the devil, how could a devil open the eyes of a man born blind?

Reveals He is the Son of God

Again, the faith of we Twelve was tested as he now started to claim his divinity before the crowd.

You say to someone the Father sent into this world,

“You are blaspheming”

Because he says, “I am the Son of God.”

If I am not doing my Father’s work, there is no need to believe me,

*But if I am doing it,
Then even if you refuse to believe in me,
At least believe in the work I do;
Then you will know for sure,
That the Father is in me and I am in the Father.*

Again, many left him, but the Twelve remained steadfast. We were relieved, however, when Jesus led us back across the Jordan, many of his other followers in tow.

Enlarges his disciple band

Hoping to build a bigger band of faithful followers, Jesus interviewed all of his other followers, selecting those who did not hesitate, dismissing one who wanted to bury his father first, another who wanted to go home and say goodbye, another who was loathe to leave his rich lifestyle behind.

He selected 72 and sent them out in pairs to all the towns and places he intended to visit next. As with the Twelve, he gave them strict instructions on how to behave, who to trust and who not. Off they went and a week later they came back in high spirits, saying, even the devils submitted to us when we used your name!

How to pray

While they were away, Jesus spent more time with the Twelve, he taught them how to pray,

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil. Amen.*

The crowds were still around us. My son wanted his disciples to know that his mission was not just to the Jews, but this was to be a controversial issue among them long

after he left them. He told the story of the Good Samaritan, he cured 10 lepers and only the Samaritan came back to thank him. Later they would know that the spreading of his good news would not be without conflict and bloodshed,

I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!

There is first a baptism I must still receive and how great is my distress until it is over.

Pharisees' Aggression

The Pharisees were becoming ever more aggressive. But Jesus continued his preaching and the telling of parables: the lost sheep, the lost drachma, the lost (prodigal) son, the crafty steward, the widow versus the judge, the talents, the guests who refused to come to the wedding feast. The Twelve kept watch over him, crowd control they called it. And he kept healing and curing all manner of diseases and illnesses.

5th Luminous Mystery: The Last Supper

We went to Jerusalem for the Passover. It was to be the last time for us in the relative peace of the towns and villages of Galilee and across the Jordan. Again, Jesus predicted his death to the Twelve, I could see they were beginning to believe him, the plotting of the Pharisees was obvious to all of us. We crossed the Jordan near Jericho, Jesus healed a blind man there. The crowds were thick, we all got a little laugh out of tiny Zaccheus who climbed a fig tree to get a better view, but then Jesus blessed him for his faith and we went and had a meal in his house.

Crowds' adulation

We entered Jerusalem in a triumphal procession, the crowds laying palms before the donkey Jesus rode and singing Hosannas to their Lord. Again, we went straight to the Temple, and again Jesus made a whip and cleared out all the merchants and money-changers. We knew were attracting too much attention, but it was too late anyway, it was clear that the Jewish leaders wanted to kill him.

Jesus' parables now were about the coming of the kingdom and the judgments that would then occur: the fig tree, the 10 virgins, the talents. But the Twelve were to be privy to so much more.

Preparing the Apostles for His End

The rich, reluctant full-time disciple, Joseph of Arimathea, loaned us the large upper room in his house in Jerusalem. Jesus sent Peter and John with us women to prepare for the Passover meal. Unbeknown to us all, Judas was now meeting with the Sanhedrin leaders to betray Jesus to them for 30 pieces of silver.

We all went to the upper room. We women prepared the meal according to the ancient custom. Jesus surprised us all by washing the feet of his disciples, maybe they were beginning to understand what he meant by saying, if you want to be the first, then you must be the servant of all. They sat down to the meal, 13 strong and we served them. Jesus began by predicting his betrayal, glancing at Judas as he did so, we were all oblivious to this. Then he looked at Peter and predicted his denials. Of course, Peter strongly denied this would happen, we still had no idea of what was to take place.

I stood there with tears in my eyes as Jesus talked to his disciples for the final time. He was trying to tell them to have faith in him for who he was and Who they now knew Him to be.

*Do not let your hearts be troubled,
Trust in God and trust in me,*

I am going now to prepare a place for you,

I shall return to take you with me.

Jesus was clearly worried about the depth of their faith in him, saying to Phillip's query,

You have been with me all this time and you still do not know me.

But again he told them:

*I am going away now
But the advocate, the Holy Spirit,
Will teach you everything
I am the vine, you are the branches,
Whoever remains in me and I in him, bears fruit in plenty.
If you remain in me and my words remain in you,
You may ask what you will, and you will get it.
You did not choose me, but I chose you,
And I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last,
And then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name.
What I command you is to love one another.
I have told you all this so your faith may not be shaken,
They will expel you from the synagogues,
And indeed, the hour is coming
When anyone who kills you will think he is doing a holy duty to God.
It is for your own good that I am going, because unless I go,
The Holy Spirit will not come to you,
But if I do go, I will send him to you,*

*And when he comes he will show the world how wrong it was,
About sin, and about who is right, and about judgment,
Then I saw my son raise his eyes to heaven and pray to his Father,
Father, the hour has come, glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you,
And, through the power over all mankind that you have given him,
Let him give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him.*

The Breaking of Bread

Then came the explanation of the words that had driven many of his followers away from him. He said to us all,

I have longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

Then, he took some bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to us, saying,

This is my body which shall be given for you; do this as a memorial for me.

Then he did the same with a cup of wine and said,

This cup is a new covenant in my blood which shall be poured out for you,
and we all drank from it.

1st Sorrowful Mystery: Agony and Arrest

Agony in the Garden

Then came the final test of the disciples' faith. He led them to the garden of Gethsemane and went apart from them to pray. John told me later they all went to sleep, despite his trying to keep them awake, so much for their support in his crisis. I knew Jesus was fully aware of the torture awaiting him. I knew he was a real man and that he would suffer as a real human being, no allowance made for his divinity. He wept tears of blood, he prayed: Father let this chalice pass from me, but not mine but thy will be done.

When the soldiers of the high priests, led by Judas, came into the garden to arrest him, Peter sprang up and cut off the ear of one of them. Too late! Jesus healed his ear and was led away. The disciples were terrified. We women followed but only Peter and John caught us up and came with us.

In the courtyard of the High Priest we gathered around a fire set by the servants. Peter was challenged for his Galilean accent by a mere servant girl, three times I heard him vehemently deny he knew Jesus at all. Then, at dawn, the rooster crowed and Peter, remembering Jesus' prediction, burst into tears and stumbled away. Apart from the youngest, John, all his disciples deserted him in his final time, indeed, "Ye of little faith."

Clearly, the Twelve needed much more than they had been given to date. It would come in 53 days' time.

At this time, I simply had to trust in God that my Son's mission would survive beyond His death.

Panel VI

The Crucifixion of Jesus

The Pharisees

John the Baptist first attracted the attention of the Pharisees, the crowds were flocking to him to be baptized in the Jordan and to listen to his preaching about the coming of the Messiah. They sent men to ask him why he was doing this. So when he told them he was preparing the way for the Christ, they were very disturbed about this. When Herod threw him into prison and eventually beheaded him, they were greatly relieved. But then my son came to Jerusalem and cleared the Temple forecourt with a whip. And he started to do miracles, curing and healing and expelling demons. And his disciples continued baptizing in the Jordan and even larger crowds came to them. They knew they had a major problem now, a tangible threat to their religious domination of the common people.

So they followed us around, everywhere we went, at first looking for the opportunity to prove Jesus was a fake or at least an unbeliever, unfaithful to the Law. They criticized Jesus when his disciples picked grain on the Sabbath – a triviality, he replied. They pretended outrage when he cured a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath – he countered by asking them if they had only one sheep and it fell down a hole on the Sabbath, would they rescue it? They were not used to this, he was challenging their authority, already we could see them whispering among themselves, the words ‘kill’ and ‘destroy’ carrying to those around.

They tried to say he worked for the devil, saying he cured a possessed deaf and blind man by the power of Satan. But he said, your logic is pathetic, why would Satan cast out Satan? So they asked him for a sign that he was from God, he condemned their lack of faith, saying the doubting Job, the unfaithful inhabitants of Nineveh and even the skeptical Queen of Sheba would all rise up and join him in condemning them.

He was in full flight, ruthlessly attacking their integrity and their motives. I had left him to meet my stepchildren and their families, we couldn’t get back into the room where he was. Someone said his brothers and I were outside wanting to speak with him, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?”, he said. Then he pointed to the Twelve and the women accompanying them and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my mother and sister and brother.” I knew what he meant, the disciples would understand even more as he illustrated his message with similes like, “I am the vine, you are the branches.”

Tests

In the early days, they thought, as scholars and teachers, they could get the best of him in an argument. Simon, a Pharisee, invited us to a meal, the incident when Mary Magdalen washed his feet with her tears. When Simon criticized this, Jesus embarrassed him for his lack of hospitality, but he went a lot further, praising Mary for her faith and telling her, "Your sins are forgiven." The other guests were astounded, "Who is this man, he even forgives sins!" The Pharisees were outraged, he had to die!

The three years passed quickly, for us the pattern was much the same. Miracles, preaching in parables, worshipping crowds in the countryside, muted crowds in Jerusalem scared of the Pharisees and Sadducees, scribes, lawyers and Temple police. The Roman soldiers ignored this controversy, Jews against Jews helped to maintain the peace by taking the people's minds off the occupying power. Several times the Pharisees tried to arrest Jesus, but each time the crowd mood deterred them. So they thought up ways to trip him up so they could justify seizing him.

They brought to us a young woman and made her stand before Jesus. They said she had just been taken in the very act of adultery. I wondered where the sinning man was. By our Law, they said, she should be stoned to death, what do you say, they asked Jesus. Well he said nothing, they waited, he bent down and started doodling in the sand with his finger. They grew uneasy, then Jesus said, "OK, whoever is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone," and kept on doodling. They went very quiet, I could easily read their minds, maybe he is writing down our sins, they thought, he seems to know so much about everyone, so they quietly slipped away, not wanting to be embarrassed. I saw Jesus left alone with the poor girl. He looked up and said to her, "Where did they go, has no one condemned you?" She was shivering with fear but said, "No one, sir." He looked at her for a while, then said, "Neither do I condemn you, go away and sin no more." I saw her many times after that day, following us, listening to his words. But I also saw the anger and hatred of the Pharisees growing stronger each day, I was terrified for my son, but I knew he was his Father's Son also.

The next time we went to Jerusalem, Jesus picked his fight with them. He saw by the Temple door a beggar, a man born blind. I heard one of the Twelve ask Jesus whether he was blind because of his own sin or was it his parent's sin that made him blind. Jesus

replied neither, and seized his chance to display the work of God in him. He took some soil, spat on it, made a paste and put it on the man's eyes, telling him to go and wash it off in the nearby pool. We kept walking. Off he went and came back ecstatic to the Temple doors, shouting and yelling – his sight was restored. Those who knew him vaguely as a blind beggar asked him to explain, so he told them what Jesus did. So, they brought him to the Pharisees, it was the Sabbath day, they thought they could get Jesus for this!

But they had not counted on the beggar. While they argued among themselves, saying Jesus could not be from God if he did not observe the Sabbath, the beggar said, "Really, I think he is a prophet". Well, they could deal with this trash. They made his parents come and tell them what had happened, but they did not have their son's faith, they were scared of the Pharisees and said their son was old enough to speak for himself, yes, he was blind from birth, they had no idea how his blindness had been cured. When they kept up their relentless questioning of the beggar, he was emboldened to ask, "Why so many questions, do you want to become his disciples too?" That did it, they threw him out of the Temple.

We heard what had happened to him and Jesus was delighted with his faith and courage. We went and found the beggar, and Jesus asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" and the beggar said, "Tell me who he is so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "I am he." The man fell down and worshipped Jesus, we had another disciple!

One of the smart lawyers outwitted himself. He was from the Sadducees camp, the group that did not believe in life after death. To disconcert Jesus, he stood up and asked, "Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" I saw this was an easy one for my son, he left it to the lawyer and got an answer he wanted everyone to know, the greatest commandment of them all. "What does it say in the Law?", he asked. The lawyer was forced to reply,

*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul,
with all your strength and with all your mind,
and you must love your neighbor as yourself.*

"Correct", said Jesus, "Do this and eternal life is yours."

A few days later my Son and I received another invitation to dine at the house of a Pharisee. The hospitality, or lack of it, was what we expected. There was no water for us to wash our hands, so we just sat down at the end of the table. This gave the Pharisee the opportunity to humiliate my son, asking why he had not washed his hands. Jesus was furious and he went on the attack.

*Oh you Pharisees, you clean the outside of the cup and plate, but inside yourselves
you are filled with extortion and wickedness...
you bind people to all kinds of trivia ... but you overlook justice and the love of God...
You like to take the seats of honor in the synagogues
and to be greeted obsequiously in the market place, but you are like the unmarked
tombs that people walk over without taking notice.*

Our pesky lawyer remonstrated, saying such language offended the lawyers too. So Jesus rounded on him, castigating lawyers for loading unendurable burdens on the common people, burdens they do not lift a finger to help lift. And we heard him say much more. When we left the house, the scribes and Pharisees were furious. They followed us and launched a series of questions, all trying to trap Jesus so they could accuse him of blasphemy or treason or both!

But the crowds were waiting outside, so Jesus gave them some more of their own medicine,

Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, against their hypocrisy.

They slunk away, their heads down low and the people parted to let them go. Then Jesus spoke to the crowd for a long time, telling them,

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more.

I will tell you whom to fear, fear him who has the power to cast into hell.

He told the Twelve and the crowd to be for him, to declare themselves for him. He warned them against hoarding possessions but to trust in God's providence, giving alms and preparing for the coming of the Messiah. To support this warning, he gave them the parables of the barren fig tree, the mustard seed, the yeast.

He continued to heal on the Sabbath, a crippled woman, a man with dropsy. The Pharisees' criticisms became louder and louder. He continued to accept their dinner invitations, knowing their true motives. But he also ate with tax collectors, with

prostitutes, with known criminals and of course the Pharisees pretended great indignation over that. His parables to these people were about God's mercy, the lost sheep, the lost drachma, the prodigal son.

When my Son spoke about the crafty steward and about money, saying no man can serve two masters, you cannot be the slave of both God and money, the Pharisees, who loved money, laughed at him. So my son told them a parable, one for their ears especially. I could soon see they hated him even more.

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate lay a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place,

*so that those who want to go from here to you cannot,
nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'*

He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

"No, father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent."

He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

And so it proved to be. They were not convinced even when somebody did rise from the dead.

Lazarus

A while later Martha sent a message to her sister, asking her to come home immediately, so Mary Magdalen left us. Not too long after that, another messenger came to Jesus to tell him that Lazarus was really sick and would soon die. We were in Galilee and had no wish to go near Jerusalem, the Pharisees were obviously out for blood. Jesus delayed going to Bethany, then saying, "Lazarus is resting, I am going to waken him." Obviously the Twelve didn't think this was enough reason to risk their lives, so later Jesus said plainly, "Lazarus is dead. Let us go to him." This time it was Thomas who summoned up enough faith and courage to say, "Let us go too, and die with him." Unfortunately, Thomas' faith only went so far as he would soon discover for himself.

Martha came out to meet us, Mary was in tears and mourning back at the house, Martha was a little bitter, saying her brother was four days in the tomb, but adding, "If you had been here, he would not have died." Then came a statement of faith, more public, more profound, than that of the Twelve, and this from a woman! The interplay from Jesus to Martha to Jesus to Martha went like this,

Your brother will rise again.

I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.

I am the resurrection,

If anyone believes in me, even though he die, he shall live,

And whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Do you believe this?

Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God,

the one who has come into this world.

Then Martha left us to fetch her sister, saying Jesus wanted to talk to her. Mary came running, threw herself at his feet, weeping and saying as did her sister, "Lord, if you had been here, he would not have died."

I could see my son's heart melt. Her faith and her love were too much for him to bear. He prayed to his Father, then called out in a loud voice,

Lazarus, come here! Come out!

And to the amazement of all, including the many inhabitants of Jerusalem who had come to pay their respects to Martha and Mary, Lazarus walked out of the tomb into his sisters' arms.

Many of the same Pharisees, scribes and lawyers who pestered us had come to Bethany to pay their respects, the family was held in high respect both when the parents were alive and still to this day. They saw the raising from the dead, they went away convinced Jesus had to die! I wondered what they would make of his resurrection from the death they were determined to inflict.

Jesus Continues His Attacks

But Jesus continued to provoke them and to convince the crowds of their hypocrisy and unworthiness before God. He told the story of the Pharisee and the Publican, the tax collector.

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God.

*For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled,
and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

I suppose it was no wonder they hated him and were determined to put him to death. Their day would be soon. By now the Chief Priests, the leaders of the Sanhedrin, had joined in, they agreed Jesus must be silenced. Then came the triumphal procession into Jerusalem a few days before the Feast of Passover. Our enemies were even more incensed, they would get their revenge.

When Jesus was speaking in the Temple on one of those last days, the chief priests themselves, along with some scribes and Pharisees, came to question him, demanding by what authority did he speak and act as he did. Jesus was prepared for them, saying, first I will ask you a question,

John's baptism. Did it come from heaven or from man?

They argued it out among themselves, saying, if we say from heaven, he will say 'Why did you refuse to believe him?', and if we say from man, the people will stone us because they are convinced John was a prophet. So they replied, they did not know where it came from. Jesus, knowing they would have the same dilemma over his words and actions, flipped them off, saying,

Neither will I tell you where my authority comes from.

The people were aghast. They seldom even saw the chief priests, let alone out in the public court, let alone confronting a mere layman and being bested by him.

Their cohort, the Sadducees, who do not believe in the resurrection of the dead, cooked up an elaborate story and brought it to Jesus to trick him. I heard their question and Jesus' reply:

Teacher, Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. Now there were seven brothers among us.

The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?

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You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead— have you not read what God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. The Sadducees exited, their faces bright red.

Next to be silenced were the Pharisees. They were delighted he had outwitted the Sadducees but not so much when he posed this question,

What is your opinion of the Christ, whose son is he?

They brightened up, this was an easy one, they answered,

David's.

Jesus continued,

Then how is it, that David, moved by the Spirit, calls him Lord where he says,

The Lord said to my Lord

“Sit at my right hand

And I will put your enemies under your feet.”

If David can call him Lord, then how can he be his son?

I smiled, thinking my Son had a unfair advantage! But that was the end of their questions, they dared ask no more.

Free from their constant interruptions, my son launched into a litany of indictments of the scribes, Sadducees, Pharisees and lawyers. He told the crowd they must do what these leaders say, since that is the law of Moses, but he told them not to do what they do, since they are hypocrites,

The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

For they bind heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men,

Rabbi, Rabbi.

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?
O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that kills the prophets, and stones them which are sent
unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers
her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!
Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

2nd Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus is Scourged

Arrest, Trial, Condemnation

But we both knew they would have their revenge. It came when Jesus took the Twelve with him after the Passover meal to pray in the Garden of Olives. The traitor Judas Iscariot told them where Jesus could be captured in private, during the darkness of night. Armed with swords and clubs, a large number of their cronies came and arrested Jesus, the Eleven all ran away. I was standing with Mary Magdalen and the other women outside the gates as they went past us. We followed. Peter returned with John and they followed along also.

We saw him taken before the full Sanhedrin, 71 strong. They brought witnesses as the Law required them to do, but no two witnesses could agree. They were losing this case! Desperate, the high priest said to Jesus,

I put you on oath to tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus answered,

The words are your own.

*Moreover I tell you that from this time onward, you will see the Son of Man seated at
the right hand of God
and coming on the clouds of heaven.*

I heard them all shout, Blasphemy! The high priest asked for their verdict. They all said,

He has blasphemed, he deserves to die.

Then they spat in his face and hit him with their fists, their hatred was intense, but they did not have the power to put anyone to death. They locked Jesus in a cell and in the morning they took him bound to the Roman Governor, Pilate, again we followed.

I could see Pilate was not able to make any sense of all of this, he thought it was a religious dispute, not important enough to merit the death sentence. Maybe something else was, he asked Jesus,

Are you the king of the Jews?

Jesus answered Pilate indirectly,

You have said it.

So Pilate thought he could get out of this situation by sending Jesus to Herod, the actual king of the Jews, albeit not in the line of David, not divinely anointed. We followed along into the courtyard of Herod's palace. Herod was delighted to meet Jesus, knowing too well his reputation and hoping to see a miracle. But Jesus would not even look at Herod, let alone answer his silly questions, Herod was no king of his. We watched as Herod and his guards made fun of Jesus, put a royal cloak on him, mocked him and sent him back to Pilate, now Herod's new friend.

Pilate thought he could let the accusers off the hook lightly. He asked them to choose a notorious bandit and rebel, Barabbas, or Jesus as his gift to them on the occasion of this, their biggest feast. But he guessed wrong, they chose Barabbas.

When he asked what they wanted him to do with Jesus, the crowd of cronies shouted,

Let him be crucified.

I could scarcely breathe. I knew Pilate would give in, a riot was imminent. He released Barabbas and ordered Jesus to be crucified. My heart broke.

Passion and Death

It had started at the Passover meal. I dreaded hearing Jesus tell the Twelve they would all that very night desert him in his hour of need. Peter's protestations were rebuffed, Jesus telling him he would deny he knew my son three times that night before the rooster crowed. We all followed Jesus as he went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, the Twelve entering the garden with him, we women staying by the gate.

Then came the noisy mob with torches, clubs and swords, led by Judas Iscariot who went up to Jesus and kissed him. Jesus was disgusted with this man, it would be better if he had never been born, "Do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" But the mob seized him and led him away. I was terrified for him, knowing full well the prophecies about his passion and death. He looked at me as he went by and held my gaze, to give me strength.

He was taken before the whole Sanhedrin and questioned by the high priest, Annas. They faked an excuse to convict him of blasphemy, and Caiaphas condemned him to death. I stood there unmoving, almost not breathing, then the torture, the beatings, started. I winced at every blow the guards gave him, some so hard he stumbled and fell,

only to be dragged back to his feet. Then they threw him in a cell until dawn came. I had never felt so alone, three times I heard Peter deny he even knew Jesus. I thought, skeptically, “Upon this rock I will build my church?” How fickle are men, only God is ever faithful. Then John came to one side of me and Mary Magdalen to the other, we were all numb and in tears. Salome and Mary, the mother of James, came and sat with us. The hours passed slowly, then came the dawn, the rooster crowed and Peter stumbled away in tears.

The religious leaders of Israel and their paid mob reappeared. They took Jesus, his hands bound, to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, the only one with the authority to sentence a man to death. I heard the brief interplay between my son and this man, I could see Pilate was perplexed, clearly Jesus’ only offence was that they were insanely jealous of him. We followed as Jesus was taken to meet Herod, the murderer of my cousin’s son, John the Baptist. It was easy to see what a buffoon he was, a ruthless man but a pretender. He and his guards mocked my son, little did they know he was the real king, the messiah from the line of David.

Back we went to Pilate. The auction of Barabbas versus Jesus was terrible to witness. How could anyone prefer this vicious criminal, guilty of so many shocking crimes against the people, to my son, who had done nothing but good, curing the sick, feeding the crowds, preaching the word of God? I shuddered to think what fate is waiting for them when these Sadducees and Pharisees come before the throne of my Son on their judgment day, they simply have no idea what fate holds in store for them, the destruction of their Temple miniscule compared with their own eternal punishment.

I almost fainted and fell as Pilate condemned Jesus to death and delivered him up to the Roman soldiers to be crucified. How could this actually be happening? Where were God and His angels, this is His Son? I saw the soldiers strip off his tunic, tie him to a pillar and scourge him with a whip. I could scarcely breath as his body heaved with every stroke of the lash, its embedded spikes opening his flesh and drawing blood.

3rd Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus is Crowned with Thorns

Then they sat Jesus on a stool, fashioned a crude crown from thorns cut from a bush and placed the crown on his head. Herod's purple cloak was draped around his shoulders. They took it in turns to use a thick reed to hit the crown, pressing the thorns deep into his head, shouting sarcastically, "Hail, King of the Jews". His blood flowed freely. He did not cry out. I needed John to hold me up, this was unbearable. I prayed to God to make this quick, I knew he must die but why so much suffering.

4th Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus Carries his Cross to Calvary

Their thirst for blood and torture somewhat sated, they brought in a cross, stood Jesus up, put his tunic back on him, placed the cross on his shoulders and led him off to Golgotha to be crucified. He fell for the first time a hundred yards up the first hill. I pushed forward to help him, the soldiers held me back. But they grabbed a passerby and made him help carry the cross. I thanked God for sending Simon of Cyrene.

He fell again, obviously he was very weak, but he stopped to speak with a group of women who were crying and mourning for him. He told them to weep rather for their children because if this could happen to a good person, what must befall the sinner? Veronica, one of our followers, wiped the blood and sweat from his face with a cloth. He walked some more then fell again.

5th Sorrowful Mystery: The Crucifixion of Our Lord

We came eventually to the hill of Golgotha. The soldiers first tied two robbers to their crosses and hoisted them into holes dug in the ground. They had a different fate in mind for my son. They removed his garments, leaving him with only a loin cloth, then they stretched him out on the cross, held his hands and feet and nailed him to the cross, one long nail through each wrist, another through his crossed over feet. Over his head they nailed a sarcastic sign, “This is the King of the Jews.” Then they hoisted the cross and dropped it into a hole in the ground between the two thieves. I gasped and struggled to breathe, this was my son, my baby, my young boy, my strong man. But still I fully trusted in my God.

As the cross thudded into the hole, Jesus moaned and cried out,

Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.

I whispered the same prayer to the Father. The soldiers paused to look at him, then commenced their game, casting lots for his clothing. I cringed to hear people passing by scoffing at Jesus, saying, “He saved others, why can’t he save himself?” but Jesus ignored them.

Jesus looked down at John and me. He said to me,

Woman, this is your son,

and to John he said,

Son, this is your mother.

From that time, John cared for me and I followed wherever he went. John wondered about His address, “Woman”, but I knew He had come to fulfill the prophecies, including the very first one God spoke to Adam’s diabolical serpent, “I will put enmity between thee and the Woman, between thy seed and her seed, and she shall crush your head.” My part in the defeat of sin and the salvation of all was not to be confined to being the mother of God’s son, nor just to witness and endure the sight of his terrible suffering and death, I was and would be, much more involved.

Jesus was not only thinking about me, he also listened to the robbers arguing about his treatment compared with theirs. To the robber who said they deserved what they were getting but my son did not, Jesus said,

This day, you will be with me in Paradise.

But I could see his suffering and pain were enormous. Blood oozed from the nails, from the thorns on his head, from the bruises and cuts where he had been viciously beaten. His whole body heaved in agony. As the hours passed, he felt abandoned by his Father, crying out,

My God, my God, why have you deserted me?

My heart broke for him, my tears flowed freely. But then he began to die. They offered him wine on a sponge when he cried out,

I am thirsty

but he refused to drink. Shortly afterwards, he cried out in relief,

It is finished

and dropping his head he whispered,

Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

and then he died.

I sank to my knees, it was finally over, I felt relief but a dreadful loneliness. But then the whole world seemed to explode. Darkness covered the earth. Thunder and lightning filled the skies. An earthquake made the whole city shake and the veil of the Temple split in two. Tombs opened and ghostly figures walked the streets, the people all ran and hid.

The soldiers had seen and heard enough. They wanted this day to end. They broke the legs of the two robbers to hasten their deaths but when they came to Jesus, seeing he was already dead, one of them plunged a spear into his side and blood and water gushed out of him. But their centurion had never seen an execution like this, exclaiming, “This was a great and good man.”

Burial

Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man who had often loaned us his house in Jerusalem, went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Our Pharisee friend, Nicodemus, accompanied him.

Joseph, Nicodemus and John lifted the cross from its hole, laid it on the ground and removed the nails. I sat on a rock and they placed my son’s dead body in my arms. I struggled with my thoughts, shedding my tears to mingle with his blood, my mind and spirit still loyal to my God, but oh! the pain that I felt.

Joseph offered me his new tomb, hewn from the rocks, just a short distance away. Mary Magdalen, ashen faced and terribly silent, helped me wash his body. We wrapped the body in a shroud Joseph provided and the men carried the body on a bier and placed it in the tomb, rolling a large stone across the entrance. Then we left since the Sabbath was about to commence. Salome and Mary, mother of James, had left to prepare spices and ointments but on the Sabbath day we rested as required by the Law. All except Mary Magdalen, she disappeared into the darkness.

Panel VII

The Ascension of Jesus, the Son of God

Resurrection and Ascension

1st Glorious Mystery: The Resurrection

The Worst Sabbath

Nicodemus told us the chief priests and the Pharisees had gone to Pilate and asked for soldiers to guard the tomb, saying they were concerned someone would remove the body and claim Jesus had risen from the dead as he predicted he would. So shifts of two soldiers stood by the entrance all through the Sabbath and into the following night.

That night, the Sabbath day and the following evening were the longest and loneliest hours of my life. I sat on my bed in Joseph's house and let my thoughts wander over all that had happened to me during the past 48 years and to my son in his short 33 years on this earth. I prayed to my God and waited for Him to reply.

Resurrection

Jesus appeared before me in the early hours of the morning following the Sabbath. He embraced me and wiped away my tears, telling me His suffering was over and His mission from His Father was almost completed. He was different, His face radiant, His robe a brilliant white. I could see the horrible marks of the nails on His wrists and feet and the gap in his side but the wounds were clean. He talked to me, telling me He would appear to many of His disciples to try and strengthen their faith, it was still so weak in many. He said He would soon go to the Father, but He wanted me to remain on earth for some years still, I had a role to play in the establishment of His church. He asked me to go to the large upper room where the Eleven were hiding and to wait for Him to come. First, He said, He needed to see Mary Magdalen, still waiting in the dark by His tomb.

Mary told me later that Salome and Mary, mother of James, came to the tomb at dawn to anoint the body of Jesus with spices. She met them on the way and they wondered who would roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb, but when they reached it, the guards were gone and the stone was rolled aside.

They went into the tomb but the body of Jesus was gone. A young man dressed in white suddenly appeared and told them not to be afraid, he knew they were looking for Jesus who was crucified, but he said, "He has risen as He said He would, go quickly and

tell His disciples.” Salome and Mary, the mother of James, ran back to the upper room to tell the disciples, but no one believed them.

Mary Magdalen wandered off into the breaking dawn, totally confused, but then Jesus appeared before her and called her name, “Mary.” She fell at His feet and embraced them, beside herself with joy, but He lifted her up and told her to go and tell the disciples He was risen. Ecstatic, she also ran back to the upper room but they would not believe her either. Simon Peter and John ran to the tomb to see for themselves and indeed the tomb was empty, they thought somebody had stolen Jesus’ body. They wandered back to the upper room.

Nicodemus told us of the chief priests’ and the Pharisees’ predicament. The soldiers who had been guarding the tomb last came running out of breath to them, saying an angel descended from heaven in a clap of thunder and rolled away the stone. They heard the angel telling three women that Jesus had risen from the dead, indeed the body was gone. Shocked and scared nearly witless, the Sanhedrin members gave the soldiers a huge bribe and told them to tell everyone that they fell asleep and his disciples must have come and stolen the body to pretend he had risen from the dead. But everyone present knew what had really happened.

Two other disciples of Jesus went home to Emmaus that morning, able to travel now the Sabbath day was over. Around noon they came running back, terribly excited, and told the Eleven, we have seen the Lord, He is risen from the dead, He walked and talked with us and we didn’t recognize Him until we sat to eat and He broke the bread as He did at the Passover meal. I watched as the Eleven sat there, still disbelieving, actually only ten by now, Thomas had gone off somewhere. Several of His other disciples were there as well.

Then my Son suddenly appeared in the room. The Ten were terrified, thinking they were seeing a ghost. But He said,

“Look at my hands and my feet, yes it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves, a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.”

They were ecstatic but dumbfounded, not even Peter had anything to say. Then He said He was hungry so they gave Him some bread and fish to eat and He ate before them. Then He reproached the Ten for their incredulity and obstinacy, because they had refused

to believe those to whom He had appeared after He had risen from the dead, as He said He would. Then He simply disappeared even though the doors were locked.

Thomas came back later and heard all the excitement and listened as they told him what had happened. But then this brave Thomas who not so many days ago had said, “Let us go to Jerusalem and die with him,” he doubted and would not believe them, saying, “Unless I put my fingers into the holes made by the nails and my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.” So, a few days later my Son appeared to them again and told Thomas to do exactly that. Poor Thomas, I felt for him. Although he fell down saying, “My Lord and my God”, Jesus shamed him by saying,

You believe because you can see me

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

2nd Glorious Mystery: The Ascension

After that Jesus told us to leave our self-imposed prison in Jerusalem and go to Galilee, so off we went, gathering others as we walked, being over 500 strong when we reached Capernaum. Jesus appeared to us several times there, one time to the whole 500 at once.

Another time Peter and the others went fishing, catching nothing. But they saw a man on the shore cooking fish over a fire, he invited them to share, it was Jesus. And there Peter was invited to do penitence for his denials that dreadful night. Three times my Son asked Peter if he loved Him and three times, each time more vehemently, Peter shouted his love and was forgiven, being told to feed My lambs, My sheep, again, feed My sheep. But still I knew the faith of many of the Eleven and of the other 500 was still weak, they needed more than to see the Risen Christ. Some, even though they could see Him, still doubted.

On the 40th day after His resurrection, my Son came to me and said His goodbye from this earth. In the presence of the 500, surrounded by angels, He slowly ascended to His Father, disappearing into the clouds, never to be seen again by any mortal person. From this time onwards it was to be all about faith, just faith.

Panel VIII

Assumption

Of

Mary, the Mother of the Church

The Queen of Heaven and Earth

3rd Glorious Mystery: The Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

The Birth of the Church

We returned to Jerusalem. Many of the apostles were now not afraid to profess their faith publicly, they began to preach in the Temple, the chief priests and Pharisees still too shocked to object. But I knew Jesus' followers needed more. Ten days later, the Holy Spirit, the divine Father of my Child, came down upon them. Now their faith was invincible, they had been baptized with the Holy Spirit as Jesus had promised them. A new disciple, the physician, Luke, wrote this account years later.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because every man heard them speak in his own language.

I was delighted to hear Peter take command, my Son had chosen well. Peter stood up and told the crowd that quickly gathered what was happening, that Jesus was the Son of God and that the Holy Spirit was being poured out upon all mankind, all who believed in Jesus, the Messiah.

The apostles became the Twelve again with the election of Matthias, seven others were selected to administer the new community, all their followers pooled their resources and met daily in their houses for the breaking of the bread, their spiritual food, the Body and Blood of my Son. The Twelve concentrated on preaching the word, they began to work miracles. They attracted the attention of the Sanhedrin and were several times arrested but by now their followers numbered thousands. Initially the Sanhedrin was frustrated, limited to issuing vague warnings about not preaching the good news of salvation through Jesus, these they simply ignored.

I stayed with John and the other Apostles as the persecutions began. They were led by a young man named Paul who seemed to hate Christians, as they now called us, with a vengeance. He captured a young disciple named Stephen and dragged him to be questioned by the Sanhedrin. Filled with faith and the Holy Spirit, Stephen went overboard, leading the Sanhedrin on a long account of the history of the Chosen people and the oppression of the religious leaders, their executions of the prophets. The Sanhedrin began to hate him intensely, quickly condemning him to death for blasphemy, Paul orchestrated his stoning to death. Emboldened, Paul went from house to house in Jerusalem, arresting both men and women and sending them to prison. I stayed in Joseph's house with the Twelve, everyone else fled the city for the safety of the countryside. For some weeks the future of our Church was in jeopardy.

I again marveled at the wisdom of God. He took this young, charismatic, energetic persecutor and turned him into a Christian, not just an ordinary Christian, but a leader who would soon surpass many of the Twelve in his ability to understand, preach and write about, the message of Jesus. Of course, I had to speak several times with Peter and the others to convince them that Paul was indeed truly converted, they were all very wary of him for quite some time. But, without Paul to lead them, the persecutions stopped, there was a long lull and hundreds more Jews were converted to Christianity.

It was inevitable that a conflict would develop between some of the apostles and Paul. They were by now all leaders, and, filled with the Holy Spirit, gifted speakers. It was Peter who baptized the first non-Jews, much to the amazement of many of our group. But it was Paul, with Barnabas, who took the message from Israel to many pagan cities and nations and they converted thousands of Gentiles to Christianity. The conflict was over whether these Gentile converts needed to become Jews as well. I went with John to the first Council of our new Church, the Council of Jerusalem as it came to be called.

There Peter showed his true role, the rock upon which the Church would be built. He insisted they should not impose upon non-Jews the very burdens the new Jewish Christians were seeking to dispose of, the burdens laid on all Jews by the Pharisees. He prepared the audience for Paul and Barnabas to tell us all about the signs and wonders God was working among the pagans. So the battle was won, to be a Christian, one did not need to also be a Jew, to be circumcised and to obey the Law.

4th Glorious Mystery: The Assumption of Mary into Heaven

Over the years I looked and listened as the apostles and other disciples went off to convert various cities and countries, returning occasionally to Jerusalem to report the tidal wave of the spread of Christianity. John took me with him when he went to Asia. Jesus' church did indeed spread rapidly, but not without bloodshed. Stephen was only the first to be martyred, thousands of others, including the Twelve and Paul, all were eventually put to death. But obviously, Christianity was here to stay. My time on earth was done.

John was with me when I died peacefully in my sleep, knowing I would soon be reunited with my Son. John was not even able to entomb my body, that very night my Son came down and took me, body and soul, to heaven to be with Him forever. In His deep love for me, He could not bear to have my body corrupt after my spirit had left it, His Father had done the same for Him.

5th Glorious Mystery: The Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth

Over the centuries I have returned many times in my risen body to earth. Each time I have come with a message of warning, of hope, of the love of God for all people. A few of my appearances have been approved by my Son's church, many others were less public. My love for all men and women matches my Son's. Guadalupe in Mexico, Rue du Bac in France, La Salette in France, Lourdes in France, Pontmain in France, Knock in Ireland, Fatima in Portugal, Beauraing in Belgium, Banneux in Belgium, these are just a few of my interventions.

It will all come to an end on the last day, the day when my Son separates the sheep from the goats. I will be at His side, the Father has made His humble handmaiden a Queen.

*And a great portent appeared in heaven,
a woman clothed with the sun,
with the moon under her feet,
and on her head a crown of twelve stars.
She brought forth a male child,
one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron...*

Pray to me to intercede for you with my Son.

Hail Mary full of Grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed are thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus.

Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.

Amen

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.

Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.

Amen.

Dios te salve, María, llena eres de gracia, el Señor es contigo.
Bendita tú eres entre todas las mujeres, y bendito es el fruto de tu vientre, Jesús.
Santa María, Madre de Dios, ruega por nosotros pecadores, ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte.
Amen.

Je vous salue, Marie, pleine de grâce, Le Seigneur est avec vous.
Vous êtes bénie entre toutes les femmes, et Jésus, le fruit de vos entrailles, est béni.
Sainte Marie, Mère de Dieu, priez pour nous, pauvres pécheurs, maintenant et à l'heure de notre mort.
Amen.

May the whole world pray for my intercession.

My love for all nations and all people is equal and without bounds, even, yes especially, in countries where Christianity struggles to exist or is outlawed altogether.

My Son died for us all.

萬福瑪麗亞	Wàn fú Mǎ lì yà
你充滿聖寵！	nǐ chōng mǎn shèng chǒng
主與你同在。	zhǔ yǔ nǐ tóngzài
你在婦女中受贊頌，	nǐ zài fùnǚ zhōng shòu zàn sòng
你的親子 耶穌同受贊頌。	nǐ de qīnzǐ Yēsū tóng shòu zàn sòng
天主聖母瑪麗亞，	Tiān Zhǔ Shèng mǔ Mǎli yà
求你現在和我們臨終時，	qiú nǐ xiànzài hé wǒmen línzhōng shí.
為我們罪人祈求天主。阿門。	wéi wǒmen zuìrén qíqiú Tiān Zhǔ Āmén

Радуйся Маріє, Благодати полная,	Rah-dooie-seeyah Mah-ree-yah, blah-go-dahtee
Господь съ Тобою благословенна Ты между	pohl-nah-yah Gohs-pohd st-boy-oo blah-go-sloh-
женами, и благословень плодь чрева Твоего	vienna tee mez-doo z-nah-mee, ee blah-go-sloh-
Исус.	vee-en p'load ch-ray-vah t'vo-yeh-goh Yee-soos.
Святая Маріє, Матерь Божія моли о насъ	S'vee-yah-tah-yah Mah-ree-yah, Mah-
грешныхъ ныне и въ часъ смерти нашей. Аминь.	t'yair Boh'zee'yah moh-lees oh nahs, gresh-
	neekh, neen-yah ee v'chahss smair-tee nah-shay-
	yeh. Ameen.)

Every morning and every night, all over the world, thousands of priests, religious and lay people open and close their eyes in my presence, saying or singing these words,

Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiæ,
vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevæ,
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,
Hail our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To thee do we cry,
Poor banished children of Eve;
To thee do we send forth our sighs,
Mourning and weeping in this vale of tears.

Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exilium ostende.
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.

Turn then, most gracious advocate,
Thine eyes of mercy toward us;
And after this our exile,
Show unto us the blessed fruit
of thy womb, Jesus
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

I want you all, all of my children, to be with me forever in heaven, sharing with me the eternal love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Pray to me these ancient prayers.

Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, Sancta Dei
Genetrix. Nostras deprecationes nespicias in
necessitatibus, sed a periculis cunctis libera nos
semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God;
despise not our petitions in our necessities, but
deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and
blessed Virgin. Amen.

Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins my Mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful; O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me, Amen.