Seeking Jesus

Women's Monologues and Duets for Lent and Easter

By Laurel Means

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DEDICATION
For Mary Stanley who first inspired these voices

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INTRODUCTION

These eleven monologues and duets, presented through nine women, tell the emotional events of Jesus' Crucifixion and the miracle of his foretold Resurrection. Chronologically arranged, they closely follow the Passion story in interweaving the women's relationships with Jesus and with each other. Each piece, however, may stand alone, whether in a liturgical role during a worship service, or as part of a program.

Audience response to these pieces in whichever context has always been uniformly positive. Words such as "so moving," "stunning," "brought scripture to life," "helped me understand the Word," "biblical women seem to leap from the page," "exceptionally well-written," are common. Certainly, these are the very goals toward which these dramatic moments were written.

All texts are based closely on the Old and New Testaments (references cited in an Appendix). Direct quotations (from the NIV Bible) are in *italics*, with the words of Jesus **bolded**.

More than just monologues and duets, *Seeking Jesus* integrates these biblical women into our understanding of the seasons of Lent and Easter. It also assists us in seeing them as women and as individuals. Their words provide a moving and realistic affirmation of their roles – not only within the

Bible, but also far, far beyond. They are mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, disciples – just as women of today.

The dramaturgy of these monologues and duets depends upon whatever resources are available. Suggestions for characterization, costume, and hand props are provided for each. Lengths vary, from 8 to 10-minute monologues to 20 to 30-minute duets. Shorter pieces might be combined in one program. Pieces might be memorized or read with or without cue cards, depending upon the speaker's ability. Taping the narrative is also a possibility, with the speaker miming the words. And although videotaping loses something compared to a live performance, it does offer the possibility of a more professionally staged performance and repeated showing.

Whatever the venue, these pieces provide an effective means of understanding and sharing the Faith. Understanding is the outcome of the media – the visualized reality of drama. Sharing is the result of joining people together through the process of production and the interaction between actors and audience.

MARY, MARTHA, AND FOOD FOR THE SOUL (duet)

(MARY is seated in an indoor or garden setting, writing on a tablet. MARTHA enters. They wear simple tunics, no head cloths.)

MARTHA: Did you hear that, Mary?
MARY: Hmmm – hear what?
MARTHA: Jesus is coming *here*! To Bethany! Isn't that exciting?
MARY: With his disciples?
MARTHA: It seems so. So many reports about his preaching, his travels all the way up to Galilee and back – he had some difficult encounters in Samaria, I believe. Last one at a place called Sychar, something about a woman at a well. But what else could you expect from those pagan Samaritans?
MARY: Such a pity our brother Lazarus is so ill. He may not be able to see him.
MARTHA: Why not invite Jesus to our house? For a grand dinner. But – but –
MARY: But what?
MARTHA: Can I count on your help? If you could just put down that writing tablet for a second. What good will writing down all those words from the prophets do you? A big dinner – you know it will be a lot of work. Trips to the market for fresh food, oil for the lamps – the whole household in order.
MARY: Do you really think Jesus is concerned about all that? Just listen to this – the words of Isaiah, the food that nourishes the soul:
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
And your soul will delight in the richest of fare,
Give ear and come to me; hear me that your soul may live.

MARTHA: That may well be. It's real food I'm thinking of. A man can't live on words alone. Besides, it's to honor him, to show respect for his teaching.

MARY: There are other ways, you know, dear sister. Other ways.

MARTHA: Well, we'll see about that!

(Pause. Martha and Mary change places, with minor changes to costume to indicate passage of time.)

MARTHA: Yes, that evening, that dinner, finally came. Although not without a lot of work, I can tell you. Me, rushing from room to room, making sure everything was ready. Stationing our bondservant, Benjamin at the door, ready to open it at the first sign Jesus' approach. Be sure to wash his feet – and those of his disciples – the minute they entered the atrium. Then out to the kitchen, seeing if the roast lamb was done. Testing the new wine – adding the right proportions of honey. And where, may I ask, were you, all this time?

MARY: Well I – well, I had other things to do. Like making sure Lazarus was able to receive guests. He was rather feverish that evening, as you recall. I was also checking out in the garden. I'd left my writing tablet out there. Surely, sister, you've put all those hard feelings aside, remembering how glorious it was to have Jesus and his disciples as our guests? How great an honor?

MARTHA: Perhaps. With Jesus' first "Peace be with you," I did feel overwhelmed by his presence. I scarcely even remember ushering him and his disciples out into the coolness of the garden to wait until dinner was ready. But after that –

MARY: Yes, after that you got swallowed up – pardon the pun – in the kitchen, the dining room. Back and forth, back and forth. I could see you bustling around out of the corner of my eye. Began to feel a little guilty, I must confess.

MARTHA: You should have been. I had to send Benjamin out there with the pitcher of cooled barley beer and a tray of sweetmeats. Should have been your job.

End of Freeview

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