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Opening Night:

Walk with Hagar

Daily Prayer Pattern: (Refer to this opening prayer as a model each day of your personal prayer journey)

I remember the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola: "A step or two away from the place where I will make my contemplation or meditation, I will stand for the length of an Our Father. I will raise my mind and think how God our Lord is looking at me, and other such thoughts. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility. (SE 75)

I imagine how God looks upon me: with great joy and gratitude for your offering of time. Imagine God's long, loving gaze upon me.

I quiet myself and relax in the presence of God. I find a posture conducive to prayer.

Preparatory Prayer (or similar): "Ask God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty. (SE46)

I remember that I am not merely thinking about God but encountering God in a very real way.

Pray for the Grace to know the God who sees me.

Lectio Divina Steps:

- 1. What word comes to mind as you pray with the Hagar?
- 2. What does God ask of her?
- 3. What does she teach me about being a woman of God?
- 4. How does her story impact mine?

Scripture: Genesis 16: 7-13

The angel of the Lord found Hagar by a spring of water in the

wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her." The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude." And the angel of the Lord said to her,

"Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, for the Lord has given heed to your affliction. He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin."

So she named the Lord who spoke to her, "You are El-roi";[b] for she said, "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?"

Supplemental Prayer Meditation: A Walk as Hagar (***As you proceed this week on your own, you will find similar reflections such as this in the Supplemental Prayer Materials section of your booklet***)



"I am a slave. My masters bought me in Egypt. I am an outsider, a nobody, their property. We have journeyed to a new land and they say it is at the bidding of their god. Their god is strange and not like my gods. This god has made them promises. Something about a child, a nation, a land. Sounds far fetched but I stay out of it. The gods, if they exist at all, clearly don't care about me. So I keep my head down and hope to continue to exist unnoticed. What a naive fool I was.

Years have passed. I am largely invisible to my owners. I am like other slaves. My worth is assigned in terms of my usefulness, my full humanity is not acknowledged, I am absent from the page. I didn't know my invisibility was a blessing.

One day my mistress asks for me. She gives me no explanation, but says she needs me to come to her. I am used to this and enter my master's tent with my usual wariness and mask of calm. She and her husband are arguing. I don't have to guess what it's about. It's common gossip in the camp that their god hasn't come through on his promise. Sarai remains barren.

I'm starting to get nervous now. Whatever reason they brought me here, it can't be good. I hear my mistress say that I am the solution to their problem. That Abram should take me as a wife and that I will give them their heir.

"Wife".... "heir"... I know what this means. These are pretty words to cover up what this really is. I am their slave. I was not consulted and my consent was neither required nor given. Let's call this what it is: rape, forced marriage, forced surrogacy. This is the only time I'll be called a wife. When they talk about me again, they will name me slave. What I would give to be invisible now.

Months pass. I feel this new life growing inside me, and I cannot contain my joy. But my joy is dangerous and my mistress takes notice. She interprets my joy as contempt and the entire camp hears our masters yelling. "Your slave is in your power." He says "Do with her as you please." Two sentences and my fate is sealed. I have never felt such fear.

I am whipped and beaten at the hands of my mistress. I flee to the wilderness to protect my unborn child. I am completely alone, forsaken by the gods. I cannot remain with my masters, but how will I survive out here? I lay down near a stream and give into despair. I don't pray, I don't cry out. I don't believe enough in any god to pray anyway.

I hear a voice. I'm worried this is a sign of dehydration and weakness from the beating. But the voice persists. It's clear and is calling me by name. The voice asks where I'm going so I tell them my story. I tell them I'm on the run from my slave masters, that I'm pregnant and worried for my child. Then the voice tells me to go back to them. I'm about to tell the voice where they can stick their unsolicited advice, when their next words stop me short.

They start talking about my son. I always suspected my child was a boy and now it's confirmed. They tell me my boy's name is Ishmael, which means God hears. And I now realize that the voice is God. And that this God has heard my cries, in the middle of the night, when I thought I was alone. This God knows my story and cares about my affliction.

And then they give me a promise. We'd all heard the stories about Abram's god. How he took him out in the middle of the night and cut a covenant with him. A god made a covenant? It was unheard of, this promise-making god. All the other gods had humans make promises to them. I thought Abram's promise was a special circumstance, or only reserved for his people. But this God is making me a promise too, a nobody, a foreigner, a slave. This God is telling me I'll be a nation too. But in order for these promises to come true, for my son to survive, I have to go back.

I give God a name, I name them God Who Sees. Because I thought I was alone and that my life didn't matter. But this God saw me, heard me, and saved me. This God gave me hope, a promise and a future.

I will go back to my masters, but I won't stay there long. God's promise will not leave me a slave. When my baby is weaned we will be discarded for the offense of my child laughing. Abram will give me a water skin and a loaf of bread and cast me out into the wilderness.

But God Who Sees will meet me there again. This time there is no going back. This time the wilderness is my salvation, my safe haven. It is here where my son will grow, here where our nation will rise. I thought this wilderness would only bring me death, but in it I have found life, hope, and the promise-making God. The God who always has and continues to see me."

(source: https://sweetwaterchristian.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Hagar-Meditation.pdf)

Lectio Divina Steps continued:

- 1. What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?
- 2. How is God calling you to love and serve God? To love and serve others?

Close Your Prayer:

Day 1: Ruth

Daily Prayer Pattern:

I remember the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola: "A step or two away from the place where I will make my contemplation or meditation, I will stand for the length of an Our Father. I will raise my mind and think how God our Lord is looking at me, and other such thoughts. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility. (SE 75)

I imagine how God looks upon me: with great joy and gratitude for your offering of time. Imagine God's long, loving gaze upon me.

I quiet myself and relax in the presence of God. I find a posture conducive to prayer.

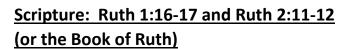
Preparatory Prayer (or similar): "Ask God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty. (SE46)

I remember that I am not merely thinking about God but encountering God in a very real way.

Pray for the Grace: To discover who you were created to be – a woman created to know, love, and serve God.

Lectio Divina Steps:

- 1. What word comes to mind as you pray with Ruth?
- 2. What does God ask of her?
- 3. What does she teach me about being a woman of God?
- 4. How does her story impact mine?
- 5. What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?
- 6. How is God calling you to love and serve God? To love and serve others?





***See Supplemental Prayer Section of the Booklet for more related to Ruth's Story

Close Your Prayer:

Day 2: Hannah

Daily Prayer Pattern:

I remember the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola: "A step or two away from the place where I will make my contemplation or meditation, I will stand for the length of an Our Father. I will raise my mind and think how God our Lord is looking at me, and other such thoughts. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility. (SE 75)

I imagine how God looks upon me: with great joy and gratitude for your offering of time. Imagine God's long, loving gaze upon me.

I quiet myself and relax in the presence of God. I find a posture conducive to prayer.

Preparatory Prayer (or similar): "Ask God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty. (SE46)

I remember that I am not merely thinking about God but encountering God in a very real way.

Pray for the Grace: to obediently trust in God's care for me and all others.

Lectio Divina Steps:

- 1. What word comes to mind as you pray with Hannah?
- 2. What does God ask of her?
- 3. What does she teach me about being a woman of God?
- 4. How does her story impact mine?
- 5. What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?
- 6. How is God calling you to love and serve God? To love and serve others?

Scripture: 1 Samuel Chapter 1

Close Your Prayer:



DAY 3: Miriam

Daily Prayer Pattern:

I remember the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola: "A step or two away from the place where I will make my contemplation or meditation, I will stand for the length of an Our Father. I will raise my mind and think how God our Lord is looking at me, and other such thoughts. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility. (SE 75)

I imagine how God looks upon me: with great joy and gratitude for your offering of time. Imagine God's long, loving gaze upon me.

I quiet myself and relax in the presence of God. I find a posture conducive to prayer.

Preparatory Prayer (or similar): "Ask God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty. (SE46)

I remember that I am not merely thinking about God but encountering God in a very real way.

Pray for the Grace: to notice the gifts God has bestowed on me personally, as a beloved daughter.

Lectio Divina Steps:

- 1. What word comes to mind as you pray with Miriam?
- 2. What does God ask of her?
- 3. What does she teach me about being a woman of God?
- 4. How does her story impact mine?
- 5. What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?
- 6. How is God calling you to love and serve God? To love and serve others?



Scripture: Numbers 12: 1-15

Close Your Prayer:

DAY 4: Woman Anoints Jesus' Feet

Daily Prayer Pattern:

I remember the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola: "A step or two away from the place where I will make my contemplation or meditation, I will stand for the length of an Our Father. I will raise my mind and think how God our Lord is looking at me, and other such thoughts. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility. (SE 75)

I imagine how God looks upon me: with great joy and gratitude for your offering of time. Imagine God's long, loving gaze upon me.

I quiet myself and relax in the presence of God. I find a posture conducive to prayer.

Preparatory Prayer (or similar): "Ask God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty. (SE46)

I remember that I am not merely thinking about God but encountering God in a very real way.

Pray for the Grace: to receive God's forgiveness.

Lectio Divina Steps:

- 1. What word comes to mind as you pray with the Woman who anoints Jesus' feet?
- 2. What does God ask of her?
- 3. What does she teach me about being a woman of God?
- 4. How does her story impact mine?
- 5. What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?
- 6. How is God calling you to love and serve God? To love and serve others?



Scripture: Luke 7: 36-50

Close Your Prayer:

DAY 5: Hemorrhaging Woman Healed by Jesus

Daily Prayer Pattern:

I remember the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola: "A step or two away from the place where I will make my contemplation or meditation, I will stand for the length of an Our Father. I will raise my mind and think how God our Lord is looking at me, and other such thoughts. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility. (SE 75)

I imagine how God looks upon me: with great joy and gratitude for your offering of time. Imagine God's long, loving gaze upon me.

I quiet myself and relax in the presence of God. I find a posture conducive to prayer.

Preparatory Prayer (or similar): "Ask God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty. (SE46)

I remember that I am not merely thinking about God but encountering God in a very real way.

Pray for the Grace: to notice the gifts God has bestowed on me personally, as a beloved daughter.

Lectio Divina Steps:

- 1. What word comes to mind as you pray with the Woman Healed by Jesus?
- 2. What does God ask of her?
- 3. What does she teach me about being a woman of God?
- 4. How does her story impact mine?
- 5. What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?
- 6. How is God calling you to love and serve God? To love and serve others?



Scripture: Luke 8: 43-48

Close Your Prayer:

DAY 6: Woman at the Well

Daily Prayer Pattern:

I remember the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola: "A step or two away from the place where I will make my contemplation or meditation, I will stand for the length of an Our Father. I will raise my mind and think how God our Lord is looking at me, and other such thoughts. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility. (SE 75)

I imagine how God looks upon me: with great joy and gratitude for your offering of time. Imagine God's long, loving gaze upon me.

I quiet myself and relax in the presence of God. I find a posture conducive to prayer.

Preparatory Prayer (or similar): "Ask God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty. (SE46)

I remember that I am not merely thinking about God but encountering God in a very real way.

Pray for the Grace: The grace to know how much you are valued by Jesus.

Lectio Divina Steps:

- 1. What word comes to mind as you pray with the Woman at the well?
- 2. What does God ask of her?
- 3. What does she teach me about being a woman of God?
- 4. How does her story impact mine?
- 5. What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?
- 6. How is God calling you to love and serve God? To love and serve others?



Close Your Prayer:



DAY 7: Mary at the Cross

Daily Prayer Pattern:

I remember the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola: "A step or two away from the place where I will make my contemplation or meditation, I will stand for the length of an Our Father. I will raise my mind and think how God our Lord is looking at me, and other such thoughts. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility. (SE 75)

I imagine how God looks upon me: with great joy and gratitude for your offering of time. Imagine God's long, loving gaze upon me.

I quiet myself and relax in the presence of God. I find a posture conducive to prayer.

Preparatory Prayer (or similar): "Ask God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty. (SE46)

I remember that I am not merely thinking about God but encountering God in a very real way.

Pray for the Grace: to be present and faithful to our Lord; to ponder in our hearts as Mary does.

Lectio Divina Steps:

- 1. What word comes to mind as you pray with this scripture?
- 2. What does God ask of her?
- 3. What does she teach me about being a woman of God?
- 4. How does her story impact mine?
- 5. What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?
- 6. How is God calling you to love and serve God? To love and serve others?



Scripture: John 19:25-27

Close Your Prayer:

Closing Night: Mary Magdalene

Daily Prayer Pattern:

I remember the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola: "A step or two away from the place where I will make my contemplation or meditation, I will stand for the length of an Our Father. I will raise my mind and think how God our Lord is looking at me, and other such thoughts. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility. (SE 75)

I imagine how God looks upon me: with great joy and gratitude for your offering of time. Imagine God's long, loving gaze upon me.

I quiet myself and relax in the presence of God. I find a posture conducive to prayer.

Preparatory Prayer (or similar): "Ask God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty. (SE46)

I remember that I am not merely thinking about God but encountering God in a very real way.

Pray for the Grace: to notice the gifts God has bestowed on me personally, as a beloved daughter.

Lectio Divina Steps:

- 1. What word comes to mind as you pray with the Woman with the Alabaster Jar?
- 2. What does God ask of her?
- 3. What does she teach me about being a woman of God?
- 4. How does her story impact mine?
- 5. What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?
- 6. How is God calling you to love and serve God? To love and serve others?



Scripture: John 20: 11-18

Meditation

Jesus chose her. But why? We all want to see the Risen One, so what can Mary teach us? On the surface, it seems like very little. Mary Magdalene did nothing great in the world's eyes. She never married. She never went to college. She never held public office. She didn't write a single page of the New Testament. She was uneducated, a peasant, and by some accounts, a prostitute. Her only claim to fame was being possessed by seven demons.

Mary was the village outcast, the source of many jokes. She was judged, laughed at, or ignored by many. But then she met Jesus. He treated her in a way that no other man ever had. He loved her. He forgave her.

He healed her. He gave her meaning. He gave her hope. She was worth his time. And Mary, in return, followed him faithfully to the very end – and beyond.

As a woman, she was not allowed to stand up and testify on Jesus' behalf while he was being put on trial. But she watched. She stayed by his side, even as he hung from the Cross.

Peter, meanwhile, was nowhere to be found.

And after Jesus died, it was Mary Magdalene who went to his tomb to anoint his body with oil (*John 20:1*). That is why we find her there on Easter morning. The Apostles, meanwhile, were locked inside a room, hiding in fear.

Mary did nothing extraordinary. She simply watched Jesus die, and three days later went to anoint his body. That's all she *could* do. But behind those simple actions was a heart dedicated to Jesus. That's why it mattered so much.

She was a true friend to him, even in his darkest hour. It only seems fair, then, that Jesus would choose her to be the first one to see him after he's risen from the dead.

Like Mary Magdalene, how many of us are searching for Jesus? How many of us have had our lives changed by him?

And like Mary, how many of us are trying to love one another in little ways – cooking meals for our family, doing the dishes, getting the kids ready for school, visiting a friend who is sick, letting go of past hurts, remembering someone's birthday, or praying for those in need?

Behind these small gestures are hearts filled with love. That's why they mean so much to us. We are doing what we can for others.

Mary was a true friend, who loved Jesus to the very end. Imagine how happy she was to see him once again.

In the same way, Jesus rejoices when we love one another in ordinary ways, because we are his face and his voice until he returns.

May Mary Magdalene intercede for us as we continue our Christians journeys, for she rejoices in the presence of the Risen Christ.

And one day we will, too.

Close Your Prayer:

SUPPLEMENTAL PRAYER AND REFLECTION MATERIALS

These are *purely optional*, additional resources that may enhance your prayer life. Feel free to use them, refer to them, or come back to them at a later time should you feel called to do so.

Prayer Method: Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a slow, rhythmic reading and praying of a Scripture passage.

Here are the steps:

- 1. Read: Pick any passage in Scripture. Slowly, thoughtfully, savor the word. Linger whenever a word or phrase touches your heart.
- 2. Reflect: What is God saying to you in this passage? Offering you? Asking you?
- 3. Respond: Respond to God from your heart. Speak to God of your feelings and insights. Offer these to God.
- 4. Rest in God: Sit quietly in God's presence. Rest in God's love.

Prayer Method: Ignatian Contemplation or Imaginative Prayer

Through the use of our imaginations we contemplate the scripture using not just the words we read, but the visual images, feelings, sights, sounds, that come to mind.

- 1. Select a Scripture: Pick a passage from one of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.
- 2. **Read**: Read the passage several times slowly so that you almost know the story well enough to share with another person.
- 3. **Imagine the Scene**: Close your eyes, and imagine the scene. Imagine what the scene looks like. Who is in the scene? What are they doing? Where are they located? What do you notice about the environment? What smells are there? What sounds? Let the Holy Spirit guide this unfolding in your mind for you.
- 4. **Put yourself in the scene**: As the scene begins to take shape in your mind, put yourself in the scene. Notice where you are.
- 5. **Notice what happens:** Let the story unfold in your mind. Stay with it until you feel nudged to move to reflection.
- 6. **Respond and Rest**: Share with God what you noticed and experienced. Then rest in God and let God speak to you.
- 7. **Reflect**: Reflect back on what you experienced in prayer. What did you learn about Jesus? About God? About another character in the scripture? About yourself?

The Daily Examen

This gift, of brief reflective time with Jesus, is intended to help you recognize God as you look back over the course of your day. It is important to note that the Daily Examen is simply a set of suggestions for you to follow or to adapt to your own character and spirit.

- 1. Begin with a pause and a slow, deep breath or two; become aware that you are in the presence of the God.
- 2. What am I especially grateful for in the past day?
- 3. Review of the day. In your imagination, retrace the steps of your day—what you did, whom you encountered, thoughts and feelings you experienced. Have I noticed God's presence in any of this?
- 4. Talk with God. Tell God the things you feel good about and those you regret.
- 5. Look toward the day to come. Ask God to help you be your best self as you look forward to tomorrow. With what spirit do I want to enter tomorrow?

Visio Divina

- 1. Pick out an image from a website, a photograph, painting, or icon.
- 2. Look at the image and let your eyes stay with the very first thing that you see. Keep your attention on that one part of the image that first catches your eye. Try to keep your eyes from wandering to other parts of the picture. Breathe deeply and let yourself gaze at that part of the image for a minute or so.
- 3. Now, let your eyes gaze at the whole image. Take your time and look at every part of the photograph. See it all. Reflect on the image for a minute or so.
- 4. Consider the following questions:
 - a. What emotions does this image evoke in you?
 - b. What does the image stir up in you, bring forth in you?
 - c. Does this image lead you into an attitude of prayer? If so, let these prayers take form in you. Write them down if you desire.
- 5. Now, offer your prayers to God in a final time of silence.

What We Do in Adoration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbyMeNPddBs

Adoration Prayer:

My Lord Jesus Christ,
I believe that You are really here in this Sacrament.
Night and day You remain here compassionate and loving.
You call, You wait for,
You welcome everyone who comes to visit You.
I thank You, Jesus my Divine Redeemer
for coming upon the earth for our sake
and for instituting the Adorable Sacrament of the Holy
Eucharist
in order to remain with us until the end of the world.
I thank You for hiding beneath the Eucharistic species
Your infinite majesty and beauty,
which Your Angels delight to behold,
so that I might have courage to approach the throne of
Your mercy.
I thank You dear Jesus,

Your mercy.
I thank You dear Jesus,
for having become the priceless Victim,
to merit for me the fullness of heavenly favors.
Awaken in me such confidence in You
that their fullness may descend ever more fruitfully upon

I thank You for offering Yourself in thanksgiving to God for all His benefits, spiritual and temporal which He has bestowed on me. Grant me grace and perseverance in your faithful service.

Amen.

Resources related to each woman of the bible examined during the retreat:

Hagar

Optional Music: I Am Not Alone Kari Jobe https://youtu.be/1m3dm82Td3U

Optional Podcast For Hagar by Meg Hunter Kilmer: https://hoboforchrist.libsyn.com/the-eucharist-the-

god-who-sees-me

RUTH

Scripture: Ruth 1:16-17 and Ruth 2:11-12 (or the Book of Ruth)

Meditation - "A Walk with Ruth"

Ruth says: "I have been asked to tell you my story. Walk with me."

We begin walking slowly through a beautiful meadow filled with bluebonnets. You and I move alongside her.

"When I married Mahlon," she begins, "I thought I was the most favored woman in the world. My father arranged the marriage, of course, and I didn't even mind that Mahlon was not a Moabite like me. I also accepted that his widowed mother would be living in the same house with us. Mahlon was a good man. He was kind, hardworking and handsome. I hoped for a good marriage. What I did not expect was to love this new family so deeply. As I got to know them, I came to love everything about them. They were my true family, more so even than my own mother and father.

We continue strolling through the flowers and I can sense a sadness in Ruth as she begins again:

"We had been married only a short time, so short that God had not yet given us children, when the unthinkable happened. I lost my dear Mahlon. And before my mother-in-law, Naomi, and I were even finished mourning, Mahlon's brother, Chilion, also died. I understand that no one escapes the pain or death in life, but this gutted me. Just when I'd found my right place, it was taken from me. We were alone in the world, with no way to live. In those days a woman couldn't own property or direct her own affairs. She had to depend on a husband, brother or father. Naomi insisted that Chilion's wife, Orpah, and I go back to our father's houses. We had been honorable women, so we knew they would take us back. Orpah left. But I – I felt I had a huge decision to make - I felt like Naomi was my family. What was I going to do? What I decided that day taught me one of life's most important truths, and now I want to teach it to you" She stops walking, turns to face us and says, "Follow your heart to find your hope"

Ruth pauses for a moment, watching us to see if we are listening carefully, taking in what she is trying to help us understand. Then she begins to walk again, with us at her side. And she starts to explain what she means:

"My heart for Naomi outweighed everything else so I felt strongly that it was God putting this on my heart. My decision was to stay with Naomi. Immediately we left Moab for Judah, her homeland. When we arrived in the town of Bethlehem, we had no hope. I could tell Naomi had given up. She thought God had abandoned her. I knew that she had come back home to die. So be it. If she was going to die, I would die with her. I would be buried alongside her, among her people. I didn't care what happened to me. My heartfelt things that my eyes could not see, and it knew what my mind could not understand. Naomi had been good to me, how could I not be good to her?

Ruth pauses looking off into the distance with a smile on her face, remembering this time in life when she could feel God's voice in her heart, even though she didn't understand. Then she turns to us and begins again. . .

When we got to Naomi's old homeland, I knew I needed to do something so that we would not starve. God in His loving-kindness told His people to always leave the edges of the fields unharvested for people like Naomi and me. So I went to gather grain during the harvest. I believe it was no accident that I ended up in the fields of Boaz. When you make a God-honoring decision with your heart, God will guide you with his hand. I didn't know it at the time, but God had made a way for me. Boaz had already heard about me, and he protected me like I was a member of his household. He fed me and he even gave me extra grain to take back to Naomi." Well, when Naomi found out I had spent the day in the fields of Boaz, her relative, she realized God was providing for us. It rekindled her hope and she came alive again. The old Naomi was back. She knew Boaz was a good man, so she told me what to do so that he would become our kinsman redeemer — and my husband. Were once all had looked dark and hopeless we now possessed a bright future.

We commended Ruth on her courage to leave her home and travel to a new land alone with just her mother in-law and she said to us, "let me give you a bit of advice, lessons I learned through my journey"

"First, always know that in God's eyes there are no outsiders. When we left for Judah, I knew I would be an outsider to the Children of Israel, but I wasn't a foreigner to God. Maybe I felt like an outsider at times. Some people feel that way their whole lives, like they don't fit in anywhere, like no one understands them. Even Jesus was treated as an outsider. The people He came to save didn't even recognize Him. But God invites you daily to be a part of His family, he loves you and wants you. "Second, When you're in distress, Let love motivate you to change. My world fell apart when my husband died. I had found my place in the world and then it was taken away from me. What was I to do? What drives you when your situation is dire? Is it fear? Worry? Frustration? Resentment? Bitterness? None of those emotions will take you in the right direction. Instead look for love. Love will carry you forward. Follow your heart.

"And last hold on to faithfulness because it is the father of many blessings. I trust God for Who He is, not for what he does for me. But God rewards faithfulness. I was faithful to Naomi, and God blessed me by directing me to Boaz. Boaz was faithful to God and His Law. When Boaz realized that we were relatives and that someone in our clan needed to help us, he went to the elders of the town and contacted our nearest relatives to see if he would help us. When that man couldn't fulfill his duty, Boaz took action to redeem our property and care for us. He was faithful to God and as a result, God blessed both of us and him. God always makes a way for those who love him. The guidelines He gave for the harvest blessed us with food. The guidelines He gave for treating widows blessed us with a new family and me with a husband. And of course, that led to my greatest blessing my son Obed. He became a blessing as he fathered Jesse who fathered David, Israel's great king and a man after God's own heart.

When you are faithful to God He will bless you." Wisdom from Women in the Bible by John C. Maxwell

Suggested Songs to reflect with Ruth's story:

I Shall Not Want – Audrey Assad

"Storyteller" – Morgan Harper Nichols

"I'm With You (Ruth and Naomi) – N. Nordeman & A.

Grant

"Sit at your Feed" – Catherine Mullins

"The More I seek You" – Kari Jobe
"I Will Trust" – Red Rocks Worship
"I Have this Hope" – Tenth Avenue North
Song of Ruth – sung by Bethany Paige

Optional Video:

Ruth Overview video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0h1eoBeR4Jk

HANNAH

Scripture: 1 Samuel Chapter 1

Meditation - "Walk with Hannah"

We are walking through a meadow and we meet up with a middle-aged woman dressed in a simple gray cloak. She doesn't waste any time on pleasantries but gets straight to the point by asking "What is your greatest wish? What is your deepest longing of your soul, the thing you believe you were put on earth to do?"

Her words hang in the air for a moment. We begin to search for the answer, but before we can articulate it she continues speaking. "I lived the first half of my life with that dream unfulfilled. And I feared that perhaps it would never be fulfilled. What does one do in such a situation?"

Again she leaves us with the question prompting us to think. And again before we can respond she says "I am Hannah, and I want to explain some very important things to you about the promises we make to God. Most people make bold promises to God during times of pressure and desperation. I know this because I was one of them. You see, every day, year after year, my husband's other wife Peninnah, humiliated me because she had children and I did not. It crushed me and made me sick to my stomach. I already desperately wanted a child of my own and here I had to deal with her throwing it in my face that I could not conceive. In desperation I promised God that if He would

give me a son, I would dedicate the boy to Him. Not only that, but I would dedicate him as a Nazirite, one set apart from all others. Sometimes when we're desperate and we make promises to God, we believe that we need to sweeten the deal to get God to give us what we want. That's what I did. I hoped God would not be able to resist such a deal. But God cannot be bribed. He has no need for anything we could possibly offer. When God says yes to our request, it is for our benefit, not His. After I prayed in the Temple court, asking God for a son, and after Eli prayed for me and blessed me, I felt better. I no longer felt the deep grief I had before and I could finally eat again. Many people us prayer as a means of release. They pray and feel relief. But prayer is more than just a release. It is interaction with the Living God of the universe, the Author of all things. We must never forget that or take it for granted.

We continue walking slowly through the meadow, the sun is beginning to set and we hear the birds chirping peacefully when she turns to us and ask "How many desperate prayers have you prayed in yours lives? How many promises have we made to God when we were afraid, guilty, sick or crushed in spirit? Even the most hardened skeptic prays when he is desperate enough. Yet how many people forget those prayers once they are no longer afraid or distraught? How many forget God who helped them after the time of distress is over? Sadness and a sense of Pride comes across her face as she begins to recount the promise she knew she would keep to God, "When I gave birth to Samuel, I was so incredibly happy, as all mothers are that first moment when the child is placed in their arms. And I did not know if God would ever grant me another child, a second moment like this. I wouldn't be honest if I said I wasn't worried. I wondered what would happen to me? If I give up Samuel, who will care for me in my old age, after Elkanah is gone? But in my heart I knew this boy was only on loan to me, he belongs to God. I would do exactly as I had promised. I told you I felt relief and joy the Eli prayed for me at the temple. And I felt joy the day I had my sweet boy. Well believe it or not the day I departed from the house of God after delivering my Samuel to God I felt a peace in my heart that had never been present before. Few things in this life return as much peace and joy as cheerful obedience to God.

Hannah stops walking and faces us. She touches each one of us softly on the chin, making sure our eyes are not downcast before she continued "My promise to God was personal, I wanted to experience giving birth and nursing a baby so badly. But God took what was personal to me and used it as a gift to bless others, he blessed Israel by allowing Samuel to become a true priest and a prophet who served God and his children faithfully. I never doubted the sovereignty of God, but I also had no idea how much God could do with my single act of obedience. I ask you now to never underestimate God. You have no idea how many blessings He will shower on others when you keep your promises to Him. Your grateful obedience not only shows God your love; it also frees Him to use you to bless others and do His will.

Wisdom from Women in the Bible by John C. Maxwell

Optional Music: For Hannah

It is Well - Kristene DiMarco https://youtu.be/8Wb_WD1emFQ

Other Music:

Run to the Father, Cody Carnes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZe3ipfQ-44
All I have is yours, Sojourner: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JDrUtzpAyM
Good to Me, Audrey Assad: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-vSGoJtBOM

Good Good Father, Chris Tomlin: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=-ak0OoFBw3c

Way Maker, Leeland: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJCV_2H9xD0

Trust in You, Lauren Daigle https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diwAiWtvAQM&t=79s

MIRIAM

Scripture: Numbers 12: 1-15

Meditation - "Walk with Miriam"

It's time for us to meet our next Woman of Wisdom, we begin walking toward a park. When we arrive, the area is filled with lush and colorful flower beds laid out in geometric shapes. Stone-paved paths crisscross the park among the flower

beds. In the center of the park is a circle of date palm trees. Within the circle is a round raised pool perhaps a hundred feet across with a low stone wall encircling it. In the center of the pool stands a large fountain with water cascading down it. Scattered here and there in the pool are plants with vibrant blue flowers. The sound of the water flowing from the fountain into the pool is soothing, and it draws us in. As we get closer to the pool we can see that there is a wide stone walkway between the palm trees and the pool so people can walk around it. And benches every few yards. The park seems deserted. As we pass by the pool, we can see that the blue flowers growing in the water are lotuses. Sitting on the bench overlooking the pool is a woman. She is dressed in a short white linen sleeveless tunic that goes up over one shoulder. Around her waist is a green sash. Around her upper right arm is a gold band studded with green stones. She wears large gold hoop earrings. Her skin is deeply tanned, like she has spent much time in the sun, she calls us over.

"Welcome, I'm so happy to see you all she says as we approach her.

"Come and sit with me. I come here often, It's very familiar: the gardens, the palm trees, the lotus blossoms. The smells bring back memories of my childhood."

I breathe in deeply. The air is warm and dry, and I can smell the sweet scent of flowers. It stirs vague memories of different moments in my life. The lady speaks again, "What was your childhood like, in one word?" This gives me a minute of pause. . . . then she begins again "I was the oldest child in my family, with two younger brothers. My name is Miriam, and my younger brothers are Aaron and Moses. Wow, I try to imagine being Moses older sister!! She then says,

"I grew up as a slave" so life was hard for me. My parents were very loving, but they were usually so tired when they came home that I took care of them more than they took care of me. I used to sing for them to cheer them up. And I sang for Moses all the time when he was a baby, after we got him back. Mother put him in a basket in the river when he was a baby, but when Pharoah's daughter found him she adopted him. I was very proud that it was I who arranged for Mother to be the one to nurse Moses and take care of him until he was weaned. Truth be told, it was I who kept the family together. I was the older sister, the one everyone could depend on. It was a role I loved. It gave me great satisfaction to take care of everyone. But then later, after Moses came back from exile and took all of us out of Egypt, everything changed. I felt like I'd lost my place in the family and everything had changed. I'm here today to teach you an important lesson that I learned – don't let comparison or jealousy rob you of your joy".

She's quiet for a moment, giving me time to think about the times I compare my life to others, the times that I am jealous of others even when I know that I am doing good, I feel they are being rewarded more than I. A tear of shame rolls down her face as she recounts her feeling of the past, "All my life I had been the leader. And then Moses returns, yes I was so excited to see him, and excited to follow him out of Egypt. I remember our excitement the day that God parted the Red Sea for us to crow and drowned the Egyptian armies. In those moments God called on me to sing His praises and lead the people in song. The words flowed from me, I was filled with His Spirit. It was the greatest joy of my life. But then the jealousy set it, I began to wonder why Moses was able to speak to God all the time, why he could hear him so clearly and see him. What did Moses have that I didn't have? I was faithful to God, I had always been faithful to God. Why wasn't I recognized? It was like a negative seed that had been planted in me that I watered and encouraged to grow in my soul. Het the jealousy eat at me and cause discontentment in me. I began looking for ways to criticize my baby brother and even drug others into my mess. I'm so ashamed, he was my brother, God's prophet, I should have been proud of him, bragging from the rooftops. Instead, I was trying to work against him. God was not happy with me, I became very ill and had to quarantine for 7 days. My brother, although hurt, begged God to have mercy upon me and God did, I was healed. I know Moses loved me but my relationship with him was never the same, that's what happens when you hurt someone. I regret that. Bottom line is, I longed for the gifts, favor and position of someone else and it distracted me from the gifts, favor and position God had given me. God wanted to use me, but I was so distracted from what I could do that I never fully reached my potential. I let jealousy kill my joy. Don't fall into that trap. Take it from me, Don't allow that to happen to you."

Wisdom from Women in the Bible by John C. Maxwell

Optional Music: For Miriam

Lauren Daigle - You Say (Lyrics) https://youtu.be/q4GeRqf3zdw

WOMAN WHO ANOINTS JESUS' FEET

Scripture: Luke 7: 36-50

Meditation

We don't know her name, her age, or her history. We know only that she was bad for a season. To be specific, she sold her body for money. Because her sinful lifestyle was common knowledge, people whispered about her, eyed her with disdain, avoided her company. Except Jesus. He welcomed her touch. He met her gaze. He called her *forgiven*.

Here's the story: Simon, a Pharisee, invited Jesus to a large public dinner. In the style of the day, the Lord reclined at a low table, propping himself up on his left elbow, eating with his right hand. His body was stretched out, his feet exposed. Aha.

Then "a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town" (Luke 7:37) showed up at Simon's house. Make no mistake, she was "an especially wicked sinner", "an immoral woman" (NLT). Her sins weren't listed in detail because they didn't need to be. The world's oldest profession hardly requires a job description.

She came alone, bearing a small alabaster vial of perfume. Did she intend to give the Lord this "flask of ointment" (AMP), this "jar of fragrant oil" (HCSB)? Or did she mean simply to anoint his head, a common gesture of respect? Whatever her plans, they flew out the window the moment she saw him. *Jesus*. Speechless, she drew closer, then "stood behind him at his feet weeping" (Luke 7:38). Little wonder. Tears often spring to our eyes when I sense the Lord's presence. Tears of sorrow for my sins. Tears of gratitude for his goodness. Perhaps she felt the same. Perhaps you've been there as well.

She cried so hard that "her tears began to wet his feet "(Luke 7:38). You *know* she must have been mortified. But she couldn't stop her tears—not when her heart was filled to overflowing. She sank to her knees, then bowed her head so low it touched the ground. Jesus didn't pull away, didn't scold her, didn't make her feel foolish. No, he gladly received the baptism of her tears, recognizing this heartfelt expression for what it was—worship, pure and holy. She could have used her sleeves to dry his tear-drenched feet. Instead, "she wiped them with the hair of her head". Far more personal, more humble, more sacrificial.

This Woman held nothing back now. She pressed her lips to his feet, "kissing them many times." Not just once in shy affection, but "over and over again" with an abundance born of passion. It was customary to kiss a man's hand or cheek or the hem of his garment. But this woman kissed his dirt-covered, stone-bruised *feet*.

Oh my. And she wasn't finished yet.

Then she reached for her alabaster box, "and poured perfume" (Luke 7:38) on his feet—the same perfume she wore to advertise her services. So much for slipping under the radar at Simon's gathering.

Simon the Pharisee had seen enough. He said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). He was not only disgusted with this "social outcast, devoted to sin", he was also unimpressed with Jesus. If he were a prophet... Clearly Simon was not convinced.

Jesus knew the man's thoughts, and so responded with a story about two men in debt to a moneylender. One owed a lot, one owed a little. Neither man could afford to pay back his loan, so the moneylender canceled their debts and "freely forgave them both" (Luke 7:42). When Jesus asked Simon, "Which of them will love him more?" (Luke 7:42), the Pharisee had no choice but to confess, "I suppose the one he forgave more" (Luke 7:43). Too right, Simon.

The Lord affirmed the man's answer, then turned toward our repentant Woman, even as he continued speaking to Simon. "Do you see this woman?" (Luke 7:44) Simon saw a prostitute, period. He didn't see her as a person, nor had he "noticed" her acts of worship for what they were.

But Jesus missed nothing. He saw her. He saw her sordid past, her humble present, and her glorious future. He quickly described all the ways she'd honored him—unlike Simon—then finished with this startling announcement: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven" (Luke 7:47). All her sins? All are forgiven? Yes. Why? "Because she loves much" (Luke

7:47). We've called her silent adulation *worship*. What she really poured all over his feet was *love*. Her tears, her hair, her kisses, her perfume. Love, love, love, love.

In comparison, Jesus told Simon, "He who is forgiven little, loves little". In truth, no one should fall into that category, because we've all been forgiven of a great many sins. All of us should be reduced to tears of gratitude. All of us should be on our faces before him. This Woman understood that, which is why Jesus told her straight out, "Your sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48). Not will be, not might be. Are. The other guests began murmuring among themselves, as Jesus offered the woman a final word of assurance: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:50). Peace? Yes, please. What woman doesn't need more of that in her life? She did not speak her faith—no verbal confession, no sinner's prayer was recorded here—but she certainly demonstrated her love for a God who forgives completely. May we go and do the same. This week, this day, this hour.

https://www.lizcurtishiggs.com/bad-girls-of-the-bible-the-sinful-woman/

Optional Music: New Wine - Hillsong Worship https://youtu.be/cZyHDrvCQQ8

Optional Video: The Chosen:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNq5eymiNIk&ab channel=SarahLiberman

HEMORRHAGING WOMAN

Scripture: Luke 8: 43-48

Meditation: Through the legs and robes stretches a hand. It is a woman's hand, worn by age and care. And where it touches the fringe of the Lord's garment, a pulse of light unites them.

This woman, whose faith saves her from a bleeding condition that has plagued her for a dozen years. Mark tells us she "had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse" (5:26). The nature of her illness makes her ceremonially unclean. She can't enter the women's court of the Temple or appear in public without letting people know she's unclean – so imagine her lonely despair! But then she heard about Jesus.

Getting to him through a crowd would not be easy. Luke draws attention to her fear: she came up behind Jesus (8:44); she tried to escape notice (8:47). Picture her cloaked and veiled, pushing through the crowd, hoping no one recognizes her. She should not be there! But she makes a final thrust forward, reaching for the hem of his garment because it is the safest place to touch without contaminating him.

The result is electric. "Immediately" she feels herself healed. "Immediately" Jesus feels the release of healing power. "Who touched me?" he asks, and the incredulous disciples laugh. Everyone is touching everyone; there's no way not to in the crush of this crowd. But Jesus seeks the woman out. He draws her from the shadows, has her reveal her secret. The shame of it! That everyone should know she might have touched them. But instead of condemnation, freedom. "Daughter," he calls her. It is the love of the Father, revealed through the Son. "Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease" (Mark 5:34).

We don't hear about this woman again, but her faith reaches out immediately to touch and strengthen someone else who needs it: Jairus, whose daughter dies while Jesus lingers. There are so many parallels and contrasts between the two stories, we're compelled to read them together:

- Two "daughters," one ill 12 years and the other alive 12 years.
- One reaches out to touch Jesus; the other needs the hand of Jesus to be healed.
- Both times, someone whose body would defile others does not defile Jesus, but his life floods into them.

"Do not fear, only believe," Jesus tells Jairus (Mark 5:36) — who has just witnessed her fear transformed to joy.

In my mind, I see the crowd disperse, following the Lord to Jairus' house. The woman stays behind, alone again but this time, because she chooses it. She hugs her shawl around her shoulders, trying to take in the miracle. Her face fills with joy and slowly she starts to dance.

https://comeintotheword.com/a-healing-encounter-with-jesus-mark-5-22-43/

Optional Music: Leeland - Way Maker https://youtu.be/EXQGTInPpZU

Optional Video: The Chosen:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUw8Mn8jPtk&ab channel=Living4Christ

WOMAN AT THE WELL

Scripture: John 4: 4-30, 39-42

Meditation Walk with us along a lakeshore road lined with beautiful villas. In the middle of the road ten feet from us is a woman dressed from head to toe in a nondescript brown cloak. Her hair, which peeks out from under her head covering, appears to be almost the same brown. If she were in a crowd instead of standing in the road in front of us, I might not even notice her. When we look into her face, we can see that she has had a hard life. Her features are sharp. her face is wrinkled. Her brow is furrowed. Hers is the face of one who has seen a lot of pain, a lot of disappointment. But then she smiles at us, and her face transforms. Where we had seen evidence of struggle, we now see joy.

"Come with me," she says. "Our time is short, and I have much to tell you." She doesn't wait, but turns on her heel and begins walking in the other direction along the shoreline of the lake. We quicken our pace so that we catch up with her. "The day Jesus came to my village was like any other day. I needed water, but I hated facing the other people who lived there. So I waited until the sun was high overhead before going out with my jar. When I got to the well, I was disappointed to see that someone was there. But I didn't recognize him front he village, and could see by the way he was dressed that he was a jew, so I was relieved because I knew he would ignore me. "But he didn't ignore me," she says with great intensity. "He talked to me. And did more than just talk to me. He spoke as though he'd known me my entire life."

"Are you," I stutter, "are you the Samaritan Woman Jesus met at the well in Sychar?" "Yes, I am," she answers. "Wow," I respond, "What's your name?" That is not for you to know," she answers, "not while you are still to walk the earth. When the apostle John recorded my story, God told him not to write my name." "But why?" I ask. "Because my story is your story. It's everyone's story," she answers. "I'm confused, and she must be able to see it in my face, because she goes on to explain. "My entire life, all I ever wanted was to be loved. I wanted to feel...wanted. I think that's true for everyone. We look for acceptance and love in different ways. By the time Jesus came to me and offered to give me living water, I was in my fifties, and life had been hard. I'd been married five times - divorced three times, widowed once, and abandoned once. I'd hoped for a good life, for love, for contentment, yet I never found it. So I did the best I could. And Jesus was right. I had moved into the house of a man in the village without marrying him. It's why the women of the village shunned me. They hated me. And I didn't exactly feel good about myself either." "It was a surprise when Jesus talked to me. I remember thinking, 'If you knew who I was, you wouldn't talk to me.' But then by what He said, he showed that He did know me. That was shocking. It was an even greater shock when He told me He was the Messiah. How could that be? And why would the Messiah be talking to me? I thought. But nothing could compare to how dumbfounded I was by the way Jesus valued me. He treated me like I was actually worth something. And because He valued me, I had actual value. For the first time in decades, I had hope, and I didn't feel like an outcast." "Listen to me now, because this is important, she says. "God will always go out of His way for you. You can be an outcast, as I was. You can be a king, like David or Solomon. You can be a slave or a celebrity, a common laborer or a professor, a mother or father or sister or son. No matter who you are, God will go out of His way for you." "It doesn't matter where you are - Jesus Values You." It doesn't matter what you've done - Jesus Values You." It doesn't matter what you believe - Jesus Values You."

Wisdom from Women in the Bible by John C. Maxwell

Optional Music: Priceless by For King and Country Lyrics https://youtu.be/DL7WLyCzql8

Optional Video: The Chosen

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ordhsDeAt60&ab channel=TheChosen

MARY AT THE CROSS

Scripture: John 19:25-27

Meditation Contemplate the heart-breaking situation of the Mother of Jesus. As evening came on, it grew quieter and quieter around the Cross of Jesus. See the soldiers occupied in dragging the dead bodies of the thieves down a hill to the common burial-place. See the Immaculate Mother --- her eyes fixed on Jesus. Oh, with what unutterable pain Mary contemplates this Holy Body hanging on the Cross --- now robbed of all form and beauty, even of Its soul --- torn and shattered, borne down by Its Own dead weight on the Cross. She could not take Him down, and had no grave for Him. Any request from her might result in grosser execution. The Holy Mother feared every moment that the soldiers would come back and drag away her dear Son's Body also to the burial-place of criminals. It was considered a disgrace among the Jews not to be buried in their own family sepulcher. The Mother of Jesus had always been poor --- poor in Bethlehem, poor in Egypt, poor in Nazareth --- but never had she felt her poverty so bitterly as here in the sight of her Jesus' dead Body.

Note the party of men passing through the judgment-gate bringing ladders and many other things. They are hastening rapidly towards Calvary. Our Blessed Mother, sick at heart, asks John anxiously: "Who are coming?" At last, when they are near enough, John whispers to the Blessed Mother that she has nothing to fear. They are friends. Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews --- Nicodemus likewise. But lo! Jesus in His Death has made all things new. Joseph and Nicodemus are not afraid now. At once Joseph goes to the Praetorium and boldly asks Pilate for the Body of Jesus. See with what ardor and reverence they approach the Sacred Body of Jesus. They salute the Mother of Sorrows, but neither can speak, their hearts are full of emotion and deepest sympathy for the Mother and Son. The beloved disciple joins them --- all prostrate and adore Jesus on the Cross. Then the ladders are placed against the Cross and they begin the most sacred of duties.

Note how lovingly and reverently they touch the Sacred Body. First, the crown of thorns is removed --- kissing it reverently they give it to the Immaculate Mother, who stretches out her hands to receive it, and she, too, kisses it and presses it to her heart. With the tenderest care the nails are drawn out, and passed one after another to the heroic Mother. See how gently and with what reverent love Joseph and Nicodemus wind linen bands around the limbs and then lower the Sacred Body to the ground. John holds the Adorable Head, Joseph and Nicodemus support the Body, and Mary Magdalen --- always at her chosen place --- takes the Sacred Feet of the Divine Master. No priest can treat the Blessed Sacrament with more care and reverence than these holy men of high degree treated the Body of Jesus. How dear they must be to us for their love of our Lord, and His Holy Mother, and for the generosity with which they give not only their property, Nicodemus his wealth and Joseph his sepulcher, but also themselves, the personal service of their hands; and lastly, for their courage.

As soon as the Sacred Body is lowered, going a few steps they place the "World's Treasure" in the winding-sheet that our Lady has spread on her knees. Then all prostrate and adore. I also will kneel and adore, fixing my eyes alternately on the Sacred Body of Jesus and on Mary. Contemplate lovingly, and mark how all who surround the Sacred Body of Jesus preserve a religious silence! How the Blessed Mother's heart speaks to her Beloved Son as she gazes on His bleeding face, His glazed eyes, His mangled body, His pierced hands and feet, His opened side. She speaks to the Eternal Father,

the Holy Angels, the faithful friends of her adorable Son, she looks over the whole human race for whose redemption Jesus has suffered and died. She prays for all --- for me! How reverently Jesus' faithful ones listen to the Immaculate Mother --- her words are loving and tender --- they illumine the mind and move the heart. Mary's incomparable grief alters neither the peace of her soul nor the majesty of her countenance, and "in peace is her bitterness most bitter."

What were the Holy Mother's thoughts as she gazed into the five wounds and sees the Sacred Body covered with gaping wounds and bruises, battered out of all shape by the cruelty of man! O Mother of Sorrows, great as an ocean is thy sorrow! What must be thy hatred of sin, when thou seest what it has wrought in the Divine beauty of thy spotless Son! What a mixture of agonizing compassion and mournful sorrow, of hope and consolation, gratitude and triumphant joy, fills her holy soul while she looks on the dead Body of her Son. The day on which Jesus died is indeed well called Good Friday. It is the day when Jesus consummated His victory over death.

Shall I not condole with my Mother --- the Mother of Sorrows --- as with unutterable woe she lives through the whole Passion again, following it out by the dreadful traces it has left? Now she sees it all close at hand. What have I to say to her as she arranges the hair, touches, kisses, and closes the wounds? And of what does she think? Surely of happier times --- of the hour of the Last Supper --- the majesty and nobility of His Sacred Person during the three years of His public life --- of the sweet days in Nazareth and Bethlehem. See! The Babe of Bethlehem has come back to His Mother's lap. But how differently His arms are stretched out now! Oh, of what do all these wounds speak to the Blessed Mother, if not of His love for us? We were bought with these wounds, this Blood, and this death. How could she help loving us? How could she forget us? We are graven on her heart in a thousand wounds. Everyone who passes by the Cross sees the Mother there with her dead Son on her lap, and blesses God for having so confounded our enemies through her means. Blessed art thou --- above all upon earth! O Holy Mother, Queen of Martyrs, imprint deeply on my heart the wounds of thy Crucified Son. So long as this heart of mine shall be capable of loving, it will love thee. O Mother of Jesus, and my Mother, too --- yea --- it will burn to influence all hearts with the same fire of love --- that all may begin upon earth to love thee for the sake of Jesus --- and Jesus for His Own dear sake. O Mother, give me to Jesus! Now and at the hour of my death. Amen.

http://www.catholictradition.org/Passion/passion-reflections7.htm

Optional Music: "A Mother's Song", Kelly Pease: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4xYK_BnLgg

Closing Night: Mary Magdalene

Optional Music: Called Me Higher (All Sons & Daughters) https://youtu.be/losW70RxJ30

Reflect Busy Woman's Retreat Song Playlist on Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Youtube Channel

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDLv21-hUo9FJ_N_iowSJmELLROOJa4iJ



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