

THE NIGHT

Matthew 27:57-61 *As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹ Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.*

The other Mary, identified earlier in Mathew as Mary the wife of Clopas and the sister of the Mother Mary, stayed with the Magdalene at the tomb.

These two women had followed the burial procession so that they would know where the body was laid that they might return to anoint it.

There is no way of knowing how long the two women stayed sitting opposite the tomb. Would the other Mary have returned to the town leaving the Magdalene alone to her nightlong vigil?

Perhaps.

In the same way that the Gospels present different stories of the presence of the women, the Magdalene is set apart in each. She is alone when she meets the man whom she presumes to be the gardener.

My friend, Margie asked would the Mother Mary been with the Magdalene? Would she have joined her later? Wouldn't the Mother have gone to her, comforted her in some way and been comforted back?

My gut says no. I respond but wonder.

Theirs was a different kind of grief. Could a Mother's sorrow ever be compared to the sorrow of a companion? One was not more than the

other for each sorrow stood alone in its magnitude, different yet all consuming.

They had already shared his last moments on earth. Together they heard his final words, seen the agony of his pain. Helpless, they watched him slip away, the man they so loved, each in her own way, one for a lifetime, the other for all her lifetimes to come. The harsh scent of his death still lingered on their robes

Witnessing the cruelty of the crucifixion had wrenched every emotion from their being. Truly they must have felt numb, empty.

Each woman was left in her aloneness.

Nothing remained to be done or thought or felt...nothing until morning.

The long vigil began.

John 19.25 And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

Dorothy Gibbons 2021