

DRAMAS FOR EASTER - PENTECOST 2006

Introduction

Weekly dramas for the Easter season offer a dynamic opportunity for worshipers to place themselves with the disciples as they encounter the risen Lord. Each drama illuminates the weekly focus statement. Drawing from John's story of the empty tomb (John 20:1-18), each drama includes three characters besides Jesus -- Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John.

In these dramas Mary is portrayed as someone radically committed to the person of Jesus. She is excited about Jesus' appearance in the resurrection and troubled by his disappearance in the ascension. Peter is both excited and troubled by Jesus resurrection... until he is completely reassured that Jesus has forgiven him and loves him. John is a dreamer. When he tries to position himself on a higher spiritual plane than Peter and Mary, they both lose patience with John and his vague spiritual platitudes. John is excited about the promise of the Spirit. The competition between Peter and John (implicit in the foot-race to the tomb -- John 20:4) is woven into the dramas.

One of the weekly scripture texts has been chosen as a "pre-text" to develop the drama. In each drama, the characters raise questions which are explored (and sometimes answered) in the sermon.

Summary of the eight dramas:

Easter Sunday ("pre-text" - John 20:1-18) This drama imagines what takes place between verses 9 and 10 of John 20. Peter and John try to reconcile the evidence of the empty tomb with the fact of Jesus' death. Mary is concerned only with finding Jesus' body. Peter and John leave Mary at the tomb, crying. *This drama will be most effective if John 20:1-9 is read **before** the drama, and John 20:10-18 is read **after** the drama.*

Easter Two ("pre-text" - John 20:19-31) Mary excitedly tells Peter and John about her encounter with the risen Jesus. John is excited, but Peter is troubled by this news. Peter remembers his denial of Jesus in the Garden. He wonders if the risen Jesus comes in judgment or in peace. *This drama will be most effective if it is offered **before** the gospel reading.*

Easter Three ("pre-text" - Luke 24:36b-48) Peter is relieved that Jesus came in peace. But he's still not sure Jesus has forgiven him. Peter and John argue about who was more faithful and less faithful in the events of the previous week. Mary (who **was** most faithful) remembers her experience at the cross. *This drama will be most effective if it is offered **after** the Scripture.*

Easter Four ("pre-text" - John 10:11-18 as well as John 21:15-19) John tells Mary about the events recounted in John 21. Peter is troubled by Jesus' three-fold question, "Do you

love me?" He wonders if Jesus loves him. Mary meditates on the meaning of Jesus' death and Jesus' love. *This drama will be most effective if it is offered **before** the Scripture.*

Easter Five ("pre-text" - John 15:1-8) According to Acts 1:3, Jesus made several appearances to the disciples during the forty days after his resurrection. John is fascinated by these dramatic appearances and disappearances, but Mary is troubled. She wants Jesus to stay. She feels useless and hopeless without his presence. *This drama will be most effective if it is offered **before** the Scripture.*

Easter Six ("pre-text" - John 15:9-17) Peter and John are once again arguing, this time about leadership. Mary once again mediates, and then reflects on Jesus' command: "Love one another." *This drama will be most effective if it is offered **before** the Scripture.*

Easter Seven ("pre-text" - John 17:6-19) John is excited about the coming of the Spirit, but Mary is troubled by Jesus' departure in the Ascension. Peter reminds her of Jesus' promise of his continuing presence through the Spirit. *This drama will be most effective if it is offered **before** the Scripture.*

Pentecost ("pre-text" - Acts 2:1-21) The congregation, along with Mary, Peter, and John, are the 120 believers (Acts 1:15) gathered on the Day of Pentecost. John has begun to wonder if the gift of the Spirit **will** come. Mary needs Jesus' presence. Peter senses that something wonderful is about to happen. *This drama will be most effective if it is offered **before** the Scripture.*

Easter Sunday

The drama begins as John emerges from the empty tomb (John 20:8). Peter and Mary stand outside the tomb, center stage. They are both puzzled and distraught. John emerges from the tomb, stage left.

John (*puzzled*) There's nothing there, nothing but the wrappings...and the cloth from his head.

Mary (*distraught*) Where is he? Where did they take him?

John (*looks intently heavenward*) I do not know, but I **believe**.

Peter You **believe!** You believe what?

John I believe..... (*pause*)....in the power of belief, the power of belief for all who believe!

Mary What are you talking about, John?

Peter (*irritated*) He doesn't know what he's talking about. He just likes to talk. He just

likes to talk all spiritual and mysterious....like he knows more than the rest of us.

John Maybe I **do** know more than the rest of you! I know there is power in belief! By the power of belief Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead! By the power of belief Jesus raised the man from Nain from the dead! By the power of belief Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead!

Peter That's right. **Jesus** raised them from the dead. But now **he's** dead. Who's going to raise **him** from the dead? No one. He's dead, gone. We don't even know where his body is!

Mary Quit it, both of you! **Please**, help me find him. We have to find his body!

Peter How!? Who knows where it is, or who took it? Maybe the temple guards took his body to lure us here! Maybe they're somewhere near, just waiting to arrest us. I'm not hanging around to find out! I'm going back....now! *(starts to exit, stage left)*

Mary Wait a minute! You can't leave!

John Mary, Peter could be right. We'd better go, and quickly.

Mary *(disgusted)* Go ahead, then! Leave, both of you! Leave me here alone! You're both good at that!

Peter *(with a look of hurt)* We're not leaving you here alone, Mary. You're going with us.

Mary I'm not leaving. I'm staying right here. I'm staying at the last place I saw Jesus' body. I'm staying until I **know** where he is!

(Mary turns toward the tomb and covers her face to weep. Peter and John exit stage right, running.)

Easter Two

It is still Easter morning. Peter and John have returned from the tomb, but Mary has not yet arrived to tell them that Jesus is alive. Peter and John are center stage.

Peter *(frantic)* I told you they were after us! The temple guards are combing the city, looking for us!

John *(calmly)* That's just a rumor that Philip heard. It **may** be true. I say we calm down, call the other disciples to meet us in the upper room, and then decide together what to do.

Peter No! If they find us together, they'll arrest all of us! We need to split up.

Mary (*enters quickly from stage left.*) I've seen him! I've seen the Lord!

John You found his body? Where?

Mary No, I have seen **him**. Jesus is alive! I saw him and talked to him!

(*Peter and John look at each other, puzzled.*)

Mary (*excitedly, dramatically*) Listen! After you left, I looked inside the tomb one more time. There were two people in there, dressed in white. They spoke to me, but I had this sense someone was behind me. So I stood up and turned around. There was this man standing there. He asked me who I was looking for. I thought maybe he was the gardener, maybe he was the one who took Jesus' body. But he wasn't -- it was Jesus! Jesus, himself!

Peter Wait a minute. If it was Jesus, why didn't you recognize him?

Mary I don't know. He looked the same, he looked normal. But for some reason I didn't recognize him....until he called my name. He said, "Mary," and then I saw it was Jesus! He's alive! I talked to him, I touched him!

John What did he say?

Mary He said to tell you that he is going to be with his Father. He's going to be with God. But first he wants to see you, all of you.

Peter Mary, are you sure? Are you **sure** it was Jesus?

Mary **It was Jesus**. I know who Jesus is. I know my Lord.

John You heard her, Jesus wants to see all of us! We **do** need to come together...in the upper room. That's where Jesus will look for us. I'm going now. I'm going to tell everyone to meet us there. (*exits stage right*).

Peter You really did see him, didn't you. (*pause*) I know he talked about rising from the dead, but it never made any sense. It **still** doesn't make sense -- everything that's happened since Thursday night....

Mary Peter, are you still thinking about Thursday night? You don't seem very excited about what I said. You look worried.

Peter (*reflectively*) I'm thinking about something Jesus said once. He said that one day he **would** come back. He would come back with God's angels. He said that anyone who had denied him, he would deny on that day. (*pause*) I wonder if this is that day. I wonder if he's coming back to deny me before God. I wonder if he's coming back to

condemn everyone who ever denied him

Easter Three

(This scene takes place on the night of Easter, after the events described in John 20:19-23 and Luke 24:36-48. Peter, John, and Mary are center stage.)

Peter *(amazed)* He **is** alive! We...we **saw** him. We **ate** with him. I mean....we ate a meal with him....like we always did when he was alive. But he **is** alive!

John *(looks intently heavenward)* My eyes have seen, my hands have touched, my heart has known the Word of life which was, and is, and shall be, now and forever more!

Mary What are you talking about, John? You **never** make any sense!

John I speak of Jesus, the Word of life, who has spoken and who **is**.

Peter I'm just glad that when Jesus did speak to us, he said, "Peace."

John Peter, I could see you were kind of worried before Jesus showed up. That's understandable.

Peter *(defensive)* What do you mean, "That's understandable."?

John I mean it's understandable that you were a little worried about seeing Jesus...after what you did Thursday night.

Peter *(angrily)* Listen, I know what I did was horrible! It was **worse** than horrible. But at least I followed Jesus that night after they arrested him! The rest of you "disciples" just ran away.

(As Peter and John begin to argue, Mary withdraws to the side and stares out "into space.")

John But I was there the next day! I was there when they crucified him!

Peter So **you** say. That has yet to be independently verified.

John *(angrily)* I was **there!** You can ask Mary here. You can ask Jesus' mother!

Peter No one else seems to remember things exactly the way you do, John. I'm not sure I believe you were there.

Mary *(still staring into space)* **I** was there.

John *(irritated at his argument with Peter being interrupted)* **I know** you were there,

Mary. So was I....

Mary *(in a strong, firm voice)* **I was there.** *(now with a pained expression)* It was horrible. I can't even remember most of that day. I don't even remember who else was there. It was so... unreal.... yet horribly real.

Peter *(tenderly)* Mary, what **do** you remember from that day.

Mary I remember something Jesus said...because I couldn't believe he said it. After they lifted the cross up, he looked down at the soldiers there and said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." *(pause)* I couldn't believe those words then. But I do now. *(turns to look at Peter and John)* If Jesus could forgive those who crucified him, surely he can forgive us who failed him.

Easter Four

Peter and John have returned to Jerusalem from their "fishing trip" to Galilee. Mary and John are center stage. John is telling Mary about the events recounted in John 21. Peter is stage right "staring into space."

John And so, after we finished eating this **great** breakfast of fish and bread, Jesus and Peter took this walk on the beach. I was just following along behind them, minding my own business, when Peter wheels around, points his finger at me, and says, "Lord, what about **him!**" Jesus very calmly said, "If I want him to live till I come back, what's it to you?"

Mary What did that mean?

John I guess it means I'm going to live longer than Peter, which is not surprising considering how stressed out he's been lately. I can't do **anything** without him yelling at me. *(to Peter)* I mean, chill, Peter! Let not your heart be troubled! *(exits stage left)*

(Peter ignores John and continues staring into space as Mary talks to him.)

Mary Peter, I know John can be irritating, but he is right. Your heart **does** seem to be troubled. Did Jesus really say John was going to outlive you?

Peter I don't know. I don't even remember that.

Mary Then what **is** bothering you?

Peter That morning when we were walking on the beach Jesus asked me if I loved him. Three times he asked me. *(turns toward Mary)* You get it, right? That's how many times I denied him. So he asked me **three** times, "Simon, do you love me?"

Mary *(pause)* Peter, I know that must have hurt. But I can't imagine Jesus was trying to

be cruel.

Peter (*hangs head*) No, I know he wasn't. I'm sure he was just trying to teach me something. But I'm so stupid, I..... I'm a failure at **everything**. I'm a failure in understanding **and** a failure in love. Three times I failed to love him.

Mary Peter, we all fail at love. I know I do. **Everyone** fails at love...except Jesus. He never failed to love us, all of us...including you, **especially** you. Everything he ever did was because he loved us. (*pause*) Including what he did that horrible Friday. I still don't understand that day, Peter. I don't know if I ever will. But I do know something: He did it because he loved us. He loves us, Peter. He'll **always** love us.

(*Peter lifts his head, walks to center stage, and again stares into space.*)

Mary What else did he say, Peter? During that walk on the beach?

Peter He said something else three times. Each time after I said, "Lord, you know I love you," he said, "Feed my sheep." (*pause*) Feed my sheep. Feed my sheep...

Easter Five

Jesus has just made one of his dramatic post-resurrection appearances and disappearances. Peter and John are center stage. Mary stands stage right with a look of preoccupation.

John Wow! Did you see that? Jesus was standing right here, right in front of us, and then (*snaps fingers*) -- he's gone!

Peter Yes I know, John. We were all right here.

John I mean, how does he do that? He's a real, live human being. We've touched him, we've eaten with him. Yet, he can appear and disappear right in front of our eyes! That just totally blows me away!

Peter Well, it certainly keeps us on our toes....never knowing when he's going to show up.

John It's exciting, **exhilarating**!

Mary (*turns toward John with irritation*) No, it's not! It's terrible! Just when I think I have him back, he disappears again! I don't want Jesus to pop in and pop out! I want him here...to stay. I don't care about dramatics! I just...want...Jesus.

John Personally, I find I absorb much more of his teaching when there's this constant element of suspense. I feel.....energized.

Mary *(moves toward center stage)* Well, I don't. *(pause, then speaks with sadness)* I feel drained. I can't live with this coming and going. I feel helpless, useless. I can't seem to do anything. I need to know that Jesus is **here**.

John Mary, truly, truly I say to you: He **will** abide in you, and you in him, and he in us, and us in each other, and each other in...

Mary What? *(turns to Peter)* Peter, can you translate what he's saying?

Peter Not really. But I understand what **you're** saying. I feel kind of useless myself, just waiting around here in Jerusalem. That's why I went back to Galilee. I couldn't stand waiting here doing nothing. But this is where Jesus wants us, here in Jerusalem. He wants us to wait here for something.

John Of **course** he wants us to wait! Don't you two get it? None of us will **ever** be useful for **anything** unless we wait here in Jerusalem for **him!** Jesus wants us to wait here for **him**.

Easter Six

This drama is a continuation of last week's drama. Peter, John and Mary are all center stage.

John Don't you two get it? None of us will **ever** be useful for anything unless we wait here in Jerusalem...for **him**. Jesus wants us to wait here for **him**.

Mary *(puzzled)* What do you mean, John?

John *(exasperated)* Haven't you two been listening to what he's been saying the last few weeks? Haven't you heard what he's said about a gift from God? Don't you understand? He's going to send us the Holy Spirit! We're going to be filled with the Spirit just like Moses, and Elijah, and Jesus himself!

Peter *(with a reflective look)* Well, I guess he has talked about stuff like that....

John You guess!?! That's **exactly** what he's been talking about. But you, and everyone else here, don't seem to get it. Listen, you round up the disciples. I'll explain **everything**, everything Jesus has been telling us about the Holy Spirit. You all need to understand this stuff!

Peter *(irritated)* Hold it, hold it! What do you mean, "**You** round up the disciples"? Since when do you tell me what to do?

John Since it became perfectly obvious that you don't understand what's going on!

Peter *(angrily)* Listen! I might not understand everything, but I do understand one

thing: Jesus put me in charge! That time back in Caesarea Philippi, he put **me** in charge.

John Yeah? Well, you're screwing up the job! We need someone in charge who understands what Jesus is talking about and what God's about to do!

Mary Stop! Stop it, both of you!

(Peter and John suddenly become silent, but still glare at each other.)

Mary I'll be the first to admit that I don't understand everything Jesus says. But neither do **you**, and that includes you, John! Because one thing I've heard him say over and over is that we need to love each other. That's more important than being in charge and telling everyone else what to do!

(Both Peter and John hang their heads. Long pause....)

Peter *(humbly)* You're right, Mary. You're right.

John *(earnestly)* But still, we all need to understand what Jesus has been saying. If we don't, we'll miss the coming of the Spirit! We won't even know when it's happening!

Mary *(calmly)* John, I know you get frustrated when we don't understand what you're talking about. Jesus himself got frustrated when we didn't understand. But he never quit teaching, never quit explaining. He **wants** us to understand what he's doing. And he will do whatever it takes to help us understand. He loves us that much.

Easter Seven

It is three days after Jesus ascended into heaven. The disciples are gathered in Jerusalem to await the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Peter and John are center stage; Mary is stage right.

John Today's the day. I just know it! I just know it!

Peter You just know what?

John I just know today's the day when God sends us the Holy Spirit.

Peter Well, maybe it is, maybe it isn't. Jesus didn't give us a timetable for when the Spirit comes. He never was into timetables. He just wanted us to wait and pray.

John And we **have** been waiting, for **three** days. Let me ask you, how long was he in the tomb before he rose from the dead? **Three** days. How long has it been since he rose to heaven? **Three** days. Today's the day the Spirit comes. I just know it.

Mary *(reflectively)* I miss him. It seems like three years since he's been gone.

John But it hasn't been. It's been three **days**. And **today's** the day...

Mary I miss him. I don't care about this, this...Spirit. I miss **him**. It was bad enough those weeks when he would appear and disappear. But this is worse. This time he's gone for good!

John You **still** don't understand about the Spirit, do you?

Mary (*exasperated*) I don't know what I understand and don't understand! (*pause*) I just know what I feel. I feel afraid. For the first time, I feel afraid. When Jesus was arrested, and tortured, and killed, I felt anger, and grief, and confusion. But I never felt afraid. I never wanted to run away. But now I do. Now I want to run away and hide. I'm afraid of the authorities, afraid of our enemies. (*pause*) I'm afraid of the future.

Peter Mary, I understand why you're afraid. The authorities haven't done anything to us these past weeks...but they could. And none of us knows what the future holds. And it's true -- Jesus is gone. But he said he would not leave us forever. He said he would come to us. That's what this Holy Spirit is all about. Jesus is going to come to us. (*pause*) And when he does, our fears will be gone.

Mary How do you know, Peter? How do you know?

Peter Because he said so. And his word is truth.

Pentecost

In this drama, the whole congregation will play the part of the 120 believers gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 1:15). It is the Day of Pentecost, ten days after Jesus' ascension. Peter is center stage with his hands lifted in prayer. Mary is seated stage left (or right). John is pacing back and forth in front of her. Persons One, Two, and Three are seated at various places in the congregation. They will stand up and say their lines on cue.

Mary John, stop it. You're making me nervous.

John (*still pacing back and forth*) I've just got to figure this out. I thought the Spirit would come the third day after Jesus went to heaven, but it didn't happen. So I thought, "Maybe the Spirit will come on the **sixth** day." That's a **multiple** of three. Jesus rose on the **third** day, the Spirit comes on the **sixth**. But nothing happened. So I thought maybe the **ninth** day. But nothing.

Mary You don't seem quite as confident about this Spirit, John.

John Oh, the Spirit will come all right....(*speaks to the congregation*)....on the **twelfth** day.

Mary The twelfth day?

John (*turns and speaks to Mary*) Don't you see? Twelve is the next multiple of three. Twelve is the magic number! There are **twelve** tribes of Israel, **twelve** disciples, **twelve** baskets of leftover bread and fish. No doubt about it, the Holy Spirit will come on the **twelfth** day after Jesus rose to heaven!

Mary (*with a look of skepticism*) OK.....

John We just have to wait a couple more days!

Mary (*pauses, and then stands up and speaks slowly, introspectively*) I don't know, John. I don't know if I can wait another couple of days. I seem to have lost all my patience. I miss him. And every day here in Jerusalem reminds me how much I miss him. I want to go home. I want to go back to Galilee. Here in Jerusalem....I feel my life being drained away.

First Person My life is being drained away.

Second Person My **strength** is being drained away.

Third Person My **hope** is being drained away.

Peter (*lowers his hands and walks out into the congregation*) Brothers and sisters, Jesus said to us, "Do not leave Jerusalem. Wait here for the Holy Spirit which my Father will send you. Wait here and pray." That is what we have been doing, and that is what we **are** to do. Wait and pray.

Mary How long?

First Person How long?

Second Person How long?

Third Person How long?

Peter (*with confidence*) Not long.

(*Peter, John, and Mary look up suddenly, startled.*)

Peter (*with fear and trembling*) What's that sound!?