

**Scripts of the EasterSpirit videos:  
Transformation Series**

*just as a caterpillar changes into a butterfly...*

*with Gospel readings*

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For queries and information about this document, the EasterSpirit videos, or Centering Prayer groups in Malta – some of these groups will also be practicing Lectio Divina in the traditional monastic mode - please write to: [imagine@maltanet.net](mailto:imagine@maltanet.net)

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## Video 1: The Temptation From the Self

*Liturgical Context: Year C, Lent, 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday*

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### Gospel Reading Luke 4:1-13

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#### The Temptation of Jesus

<sup>1</sup>Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

<sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

<sup>4</sup>Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'<sup>[a]</sup>"

<sup>5</sup>The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup>And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. <sup>7</sup>So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

<sup>8</sup>Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'<sup>[b]</sup>"

<sup>9</sup>The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. <sup>10</sup>For it is written:

" 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully;

<sup>11</sup>they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'<sup>[c]</sup>"

<sup>12</sup>Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'<sup>[d]</sup>"

<sup>13</sup>When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Footnotes:

[Luke 4:4](#) Deut. 8:3

[Luke 4:8](#) Deut. 6:13

[Luke 4:11](#) Psalm 91:11,12

[Luke 4:12](#) Deut. 6:16

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### Script of the Video

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#### THE TEMPTATION FROM THE SELF

*My ordinary self keeps getting in the way.*

As a man, Jesus had his ordinary self, just like we all do. In the desert he was tempted to get God to fulfil the wishes of his ordinary self, but he rejects the temptation. His response was to get his ordinary self to facilitate the will of God, not the other way round. My ordinary self, too, must give way and let go, so that God may act through me.

Why is it that, even if I try to reach God through prayer or serve God through my work and relationships, my ordinary self still wants to remain the main protagonist, the star of the show?

Why is it that even when God offers to lead me to the promised land of abundance and joy, I still insist on taking the driver's seat myself, and often find myself driving in the opposite direction?

What is to be done? Firstly, it is important to be aware of the voice of the ordinary self and to be able to

recognise and observe it<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, we must practice being collected. *About this, Romano Guardini, a European Catholic Monsignor<sup>2</sup>, wrote :*

Inner unrest drives us away from the place where we should be . . . the place where the Living God calls to the self, the place of obedience. In this exacting stillness man begins to feel uncomfortable and tries to run away. Always he flees from the holy “here” where the call reaches him .... [remaining in a] state [where] thoughts flit from object to object ...

Collectedness means that he who prays gathers himself together, directs his attention on to what he is doing, draws in all thought - a painstaking task - so

as to dedicate himself to prayer as a unified whole. This is the state in which he may, when the call comes to him, answer in the words of Moses, "Here am I." . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Note that to observe it does not mean to think about it. If you *think thoughts*, you're probably right back in your ordinary self.

<sup>2</sup> ROMANO GUARDINI (1885-1968) Italian-born German Roman Catholic monsignor b

and professor of Christian Philosophy wrote: “ Inner unrest drives us away from the place where we should be . . . the place where things really matter, where one must hold one's ground; the place where the Living God calls to the self - the place of obedience. In this exacting stillness man begins to feel uncomfortable and tries to run away. Always he flees from the holy here where the call reaches him, and where everything is 'in its right place.' It would appear that man, the more firmly he is rooted in the world, the more adrift he becomes from the place which really matters.

“If he wants to pray, he must recall himself from everything and everywhere and become and remain present. . . . This becomes evident in our attempts to pray. Spiritual teachers speak of ‘distraction’ as that state in which man lacks poise and unity, that state in which thoughts flit from object to object, in which feelings are vague and unfocused and the will ineffective. Man in this state is not really a person who speaks or who can be spoken to, but merely an uncoordinated bundle of thoughts, feelings and sensations. Collectedness means that he who prays gathers himself together, directs his attention on to what he is doing, draws in all thought-a painstaking task - so as to dedicate himself to prayer as a unified whole. This is the state in which he may, when the call comes to him, answer in the words of Moses, ‘Here am I.’ . . .

“Therefore anyone able to collect himself to be still and present, overcomes the inner brooding and heaviness. He lifts himself up and makes himself light, free and clear. He awakens the inner attention so that it may focus itself on its object. He clears the inner eye so that it may see true. He calls upon the inner preparedness so that contact becomes possible.” – Quoted in *Christian Teachings on the Practice of Prayer* – from the early church to the present. Lorraine Kisly, ed New Seeds, Boston & London 2002; p 141

## Video 2: My Own Transformation?

*Liturgical Context: Year C, Lent, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday*

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### Gospel Reading Luke 9:28-36

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#### The Transfiguration

<sup>28</sup>About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup>As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. <sup>30</sup>Two men, Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup>appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup>Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. <sup>33</sup>As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)

<sup>34</sup>While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup>A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." <sup>36</sup>When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

The Gospel of Luke says this about the Transfiguration of Jesus. "Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory."

If we think that the Transfiguration of Jesus has nothing much to do with us, it could be that we too are still asleep. But when we wake up, when we become fully alive in Jesus, some of his glory will be formed inside us, while we too are being transformed into light. Here is how Fr Bede Griffiths, an English Benedictine contemplative monk<sup>3</sup> who died in India in 1993, explains our own transformation in Christ.

"The human body by contact with this body of Christ, which is no longer limited by space and time, has within it the seed of the divine life. As St Paul says: 'We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for... the redemption of our bodies:' And this 'groaning' is part of the travail of all nature, which waits to be delivered 'from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God:'

"This is the cosmic drama, this transformation of nature, of matter and the body, so as to become the outward form of the divine Spirit, the body of the Lord. And this transformation is taking place in our own bodies. In every human being matter is being transformed daily into Spirit [even through the creation of our thoughts]... But for most of us this process remains incomplete. Matter is never fully assimilated by Spirit, and at death the matter unassimilated by the Spirit returns to the earth.

"But in the body of Christ we can see that transformation of matter by Spirit taking place, which is the destiny of us all at the end of time."

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### Script of the Video

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#### MY OWN TRANSFORMATION?

*This is the cosmic drama, the transformation of nature, matter, and the body.*

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<sup>3</sup> BEDE GRIFFITHS (1906-1993) - English Benedictine monk – Quoted in Christian Teachings on the Practice of Prayer – from the early church to the present. Lorraine Kisly, ed New Seeds, Boston & London 2002; p 223

## Video 3 -- How Much Time Left?

*Liturgical Context: Year C, Lent, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday*

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### Gospel Reading Luke 13:1-9

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#### Repent or Perish

1Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? 3I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. 4Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

6Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. 7So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

8" 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. 9If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.' "

Those 18 persons on whom the tower of Siloam fell died unexpectedly, and suddenly they had no more time to let something beautiful and fruitful happen to their life. The fig tree in Jesus' parable narrowly avoided the same fate as it was going to be cut down, but the kind gardener gave it a period of grace for one more year, to help it to become fruitful. The people near the tower did not die because of their sins, Jesus says, but how sad if they had no time to repent!

"Repentance" in the Gospel is the Greek word *metanoia*, which seems to mean to convert from a small-mind perspective (that of my ordinary self) to a wider perspective, a wider mind and heart where the light of God, the will of God, shines and acts through me. 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' St Catherine of Genoa heard God telling her to make a considerable pause whenever she prayed these words, praying for the most perfect fulfilment of His will through herself and others. St Francis de Sales<sup>4</sup> suggests that we too, pause like this.

In repentance or *metanoia*, I give up my ordinary self, which shrinks becomes transparent to let the light pass through, to let the will of God use it. In this way my life becomes a new kind of life, fruitful like a fig tree heavy with fruit. Like the kind gardener, Christ will help. But do I have time for this transformation? The people in the tower suddenly had only a few seconds left. The fig tree had a year left. How much time do I have left? Do I have a year? Do I have a month?

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### Script of the Video

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HOW MUCH TIME DO I HAVE LEFT?

*You're in for a great ride. Don't leave it too late!*

<sup>4</sup> St Francis de Sales (1567 – 1622). Bishop of Geneva, Doctor of the Church. His advice is reproduced in *Christian Teachings on the Practice of Prayer* – from the early church to the present. Lorraine Kisly, ed New Seeds, Boston & London 2002; p 223

## Video 4 -- A Little Test for Me?

*Liturgical Context: Year C, Lent, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday*

### Gospel Reading Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

<sup>1</sup>Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. <sup>2</sup>But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

<sup>3</sup>Then Jesus told them this parable:

#### The Parable of the Lost Son

<sup>11</sup>Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup>"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. <sup>14</sup>After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup>"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup>I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' <sup>20</sup>So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>21</sup>"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>22</sup>"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup>Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup>For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup>"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup>'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

<sup>28</sup>"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup>But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

<sup>31</sup>" 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup>But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' "

#### Footnotes:

[Luke 1<sup>5</sup>:21](#) Some early manuscripts son. Make me like one of your hired men.

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## Script of the Video

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### A LITTLE TEST FOR ME?

*Was the elder brother put in the story as Jesus' deliberate test?*

The parable of the Prodigal Son is often thought to be about the younger son who went back home, was received in love, had his offences forgiven, and even had a celebration organised for him. But in this parable Jesus seems also to be setting a little test for his listeners, and maybe for you and I as well. The listeners were the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, who, offended, were muttering about Jesus "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:1)

The elder brother in the story, the one who stayed at home doing his duty, was offended and angry because of the lavish party that his father had organised to celebrate the return of the wasteful, abusive younger son. The elder brother was angry and resentful even though he knew that "everything that the father had belonged to him". Did he finally go to the party? Jesus didn't tell us – maybe deliberately, as a test – so that each of his listeners could privately make up their own mind.

Would you go to the party and celebrate? Would I? This is Jesus' little test. Maybe I would be offended and angry. In that case I am still a slave to my ordinary self and its usual tendencies: anger, envy, a limited view of the world and a preoccupation with my own interests.

In that case I fail the test, because Jesus' little story has shown me that my spiritual transformation is still blocked. The transformation is the one that Jesus keeps trying to persuade us to undertake: notice and then give up my ordinary self and its tendencies and thoughts and emotions; trust God; permit God to dwell inside me; don't be judgmental (judge not and you shall not be judged – Luke 6:37), don't walk around with a measuring stick to measure what is due to me and to

others; celebrate the glorious abundance of God's Kingdom.

This abundance was the lesson of another parable of Jesus, the one about the landowner who gave the same, good, wage to workers even if they worked only a little time in his fields. If I pass Jesus' little test, I already know all this abundance belongs to me at the deep level at which God is already within me, seeing through my eyes. If I did not pass Jesus' little test, then surely it is I who needs to throw myself at the feet of the merciful loving Father.

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## Video 5 option A -- Be aware, Be free

### *Liturgical Context: Year C, Lent, 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday according to the Roman Catholic Lectionary*

*(see Video 5 Option B for the reading according to the Revised Common Lectionary, as used by Roman Catholics and other Christians in North America; this uses John 12:1-8 for this Sunday)*

### Gospel Reading John 8:1-11

<sup>1</sup>But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup>At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. <sup>3</sup>The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group <sup>4</sup>and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup>In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" <sup>6</sup>They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. <sup>7</sup>When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." <sup>8</sup>Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

<sup>9</sup>At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. <sup>10</sup>Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

<sup>11</sup>"No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

### Script of the Video

#### BE AWARE, BE FREE

*Some of the urges of my ordinary self, and how to go beyond them towards the Spirit of God within.*

What does the Gospel incident of the woman caught in adultery have to do with the Kingdom of God? The way to the Kingdom leads beyond our *ordinary selves* and into the divine spirit within us. Here are some of the tendencies in our *ordinary selves* relevant to this Gospel incident:

*Bitterness;*

*Aversion to others (especially those whom we think are different from us);*

*Desire for vindictive triumph;*

*Hostility;*

*Desire for revenge;*

*Aggression*

*Envy (e.g. of others' pleasures, even bad ones).*

All of these ugly factors in our ordinary self make it satisfying for us to judge or condemn or punish someone. Aha! but our ordinary self *also* has the tendency to *vanity* and has *the need to be always right*, so I have to hide the ugly tendencies in me by forgetting about my own faults, and by claiming a good, even religious justification for my condemnations: "It's justice! It's the law! ... Stone her!"

That hypocrisy locks us even further into our own small, separate, ordinary self, because it blinds us to what's going on inside it. If we remain blind and don't make a habit of noticing all these factors, how are we ever going to step outside of it and observe our ordinary self with awareness? This is probably why Jesus attacks hypocrisy – it is a monster blocking the road to the Kingdom of God within us.

And if we never step outside the lonely prison cell of our ordinary self, into the secret, silent, divine zone in the depths of our heart, how are we ever going to open the door to that tabernacle down there where God dwells? Inside the jail we live alone, but outside it, we have Jesus' promise "I will always be with you"

Jesus told us that we had to get out of our ordinary selves, out of the prison cell of justifications and judgments and hypocrisies and thoughts about self. "Lose your life for my sake," he said, "in order to save it." (see Matthew 16:25, Matthew 10:39, Luke 9)

He even told us how to get there; here are his instructions, which go beyond thoughts – he also told us not to "babble with many words" (Matthew 6:7))

"6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matthew 6:6-7)

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Keys: Christian inspiration Lent 2010 adultery woman  
Jesus Christ tabernacle "ordinary self" cage prison,  
"how to pray" "inner room" tabernacle heart  
Bitterness hypocrisy Aversion vindictive triumph  
Hostility Desire for revenge Aggression Envy monster  
"Kingdom of God" Gospel

## Video 5 option B -- Surrender Life to God through Jesus

*Liturgical Context: Year C, Lent, 54<sup>th</sup> Sunday according to the Revised Common Lectionary (see Video 5 Option A for the Roman Catholic Lectionary. and other Christians in North America; this uses John 12:1-8 for this Sunday)*

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### Gospel Reading John 12:1-8

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#### Jesus Anointed at Bethany

<sup>1</sup>Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup>Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. <sup>3</sup>Then Mary took about a pint<sup>[a]</sup> of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

<sup>4</sup>But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, <sup>5</sup>"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.<sup>[b]</sup>" <sup>6</sup>He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

<sup>7</sup>"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup>You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

#### Footnotes:

[John 12:3](#) Greek a litra (probably about 0.5 liter)

[John 12:5](#) Greek three hundred denarii

Mary of Bethany poured out her expensive fragrance onto Jesus, with her hair down and tears flowing from her eyes. Jesus had looked into her and healed her with his love and acceptance. She loved him. She gave her fragrance, her life, extravagantly to him. The devotion of a lover may lead to actions that, to the ordinary world, appear senseless or exaggerated.

Later, when Jesus was killed, and Mary wept and kept vigil at his tomb, she was upset and bewildered to see that his corpse was not present in the tomb. Her grief was so great and mind-numbing that she did not recognise the man who appeared to her then – she thought it was the gardener. Jesus calls her by name – “Mary”. “Rabboni!” she cries in Aramaic - my beloved Lord! Then she wanted to hug him but he stopped her, saying “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” (John 20:10-18)

With gentleness and love, Jesus, no longer limited by space and time, was easing her away from her attachment to the Jesus that she could see and touch. She had a large heart and great love – but he was helping her spiritual heart to become even more sensitive, so that she would recognise him in the secret, silent, divine zone in the depths of her heart, so that he then would be always with her.

It is the same for us. Like Mary, we also are called to pour out our life<sup>5</sup>, extravagantly, without counting the cost, and “waste” it on Jesus. A life offered in this way is fragrant, special. Like Mary, we also are gently guided by Jesus to come to recognise his spirit in the secret, silent, divine tabernacle in our spiritual heart. Then, as

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### Script of the Video

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SURRENDER LIFE TO GOD THROUGH JESUS

<sup>5</sup> See also: GOLL, JIM W. - Wasted on Jesus: Reaching for the Lover of Your Soul

he promised, "I will always be with you" Jesus even told us how to get there - his instruction was:

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"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. ()<sup>6 7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>See the website of Catholics United For the Faith, at [http://www.cuf.org/Faithfacts/details\\_view.asp?ffid=141](http://www.cuf.org/Faithfacts/details_view.asp?ffid=141). St. Mary Magdalene was a disciple, or follower, of Jesus during His public ministry. She is mentioned by name 12 times in the Gospels. We read that she was exorcized of seven demons, ministered to Christ and His disciples, stood at the foot of the Cross during Jesus' Crucifixion, went to anoint the body of Jesus before daybreak on Easter morning, and witnessed the Risen Lord. According to long-standing tradition, she is also the woman who anointed Christ's feet first as a repentant sinner (cf. Lk. 7:36-50), and later in anticipation of Jesus' Passion and burial (cf. Jn. 12:1-8). [...] According to Scripture, we know with certainty that Mary Magdalene followed Christ, ministered to the needs of His Apostles during His public ministry (cf. Lk. 8:3), witnessed Jesus' death and burial on Good Friday (cf. Mk. 15:40-41), and saw the resurrected Lord on Easter Sunday morning (cf. Jn. 20:1-18). However, Christians recognize that there is more to Mary's identity as Jesus' follower. The Catholic Church has traditionally taught that Mary Magdalene is the sinful woman who anoints Christ's feet with her tears in Luke 7:36-50, and also Mary of Bethany (the sister of Martha and Lazarus) [...]

In 591 A.D., St. Gregory the Great gave a homily in which he associated Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany and the repentant sinner (presumably a prostitute) who anointed Christ's feet with her tears and dried them with her hair (cf. Lk. 7:36-50). Some people claim that St. Gregory erroneously invented the connection. In the 200s, Tertullian held that the penitent woman was Mary of Bethany.[1] St. Jerome's writings in 393 A.D. allude to this as well.[2] St. Augustine concluded that Mary of Bethany and the repentant sinner were the same woman in 400 A.D.[3] The tradition associating Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany appears around 555 A.D. in a translation by Paschasius of Dumium (a monk in Spain)[4] of the Greek Fathers' earlier works. Even among scholars attempting to portray Mary Magdalene as the "archetype feminist," it is understood that these three characters from Scripture were believed by some to be the same woman long before St. Gregory's sermon.

There are also biblical reasons for the belief that associates the two anointings of Christ-by the anonymous sinner in Luke 7 and Mary of Bethany in John 12 (cf. Mt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3-9)-with Mary Magdalene. An examination of all four Gospels produces a fuller picture of Mary's identity. Each evangelist writes about a woman who anoints Christ's feet. St. Luke tells about a "sinner" who washes Jesus' feet with her tears, anoints them with ointment, and dries them with her hair. Christ says that her sins are forgiven and that her faith has saved her. This anointing happens around the time that Jesus begins His public ministry. The other three Gospels tell a different story; in Matthew, Mark, and John, a woman anoints Jesus with costly ointment just before He celebrates

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the Last Supper with the Apostles. John 12:3 tells us this woman is Mary of Bethany, who had sat at the Lord's feet listening to Him while her sister Martha served (Lk. 10:38-42). Lazarus was their brother. There are similarities and differences between this anointing story and the first one, as told by St. Luke. Jesus was clearly anointed on two separate occasions, and from the early centuries, both were thought to be done by the same woman: Mary of Bethany, also known as Mary Magdalene.

<sup>7</sup> Centering Prayer is based on this advice. For a leaflet about Centering Prayer in your language, links and resources, please go to [www.EasterSpirit.com](http://www.EasterSpirit.com)