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**Mary of Magdala
...dancing in the Spirit
a Pentecost Dialogue
by Ralph Milton and Linnea Good
adapted from
Is This Your Idea of a Good Time, God?
by Ralph Milton
Wood Lake Books, 1995**

This is the same story as listed under Church 1, but it is re-written as a chancel drama. This is arranged for just two voices, but feel free to do your own arranging so that actors are assigned to all the various characters. If you present this as a drama, even if you are going to read the lines, give it some good rehearsal so that the actors can bring lots of life, vitality and enthusiasm to their various parts. Nothing can kill a drama as quickly as lackluster acting. Don't be afraid to look a little foolish.

In any drama, but especially if you are reading the parts, it's very important to keep up the pace. To do this, one actor follows on the words of the previous actor with absolutely no space between them. They can almost be overlapping.

There are various suggestions for music. A piano is probably best, but a guitar or other instrument could work as well. Spend enough time in rehearsal so that the music moves in and out of the dialogue easily.

Above all, have fun!

ONE: "Close the window, will you John." There was more than a hint of irritation in Peter's voice. "All that singing out there is getting on my nerves."

TWO: Peter! It is the feast of Pentecost, after all. This is a happy festival. And they don't share our sorrow, Peter.

ONE: Mary knew the sorrow as well as anyone. She had left her home in Magdala to follow Jesus to Jerusalem. She had watched Jesus wretch out his life on the cross.

"Right!" snapped Peter. "But I don't have to listen to it. Any new business?"

Nothing but gloomy silence from the group of men and women gathered there. They had gone through the unpleasant business of choosing a successor to Judas, the man who had betrayed Jesus. Now they had their full quota of 12 men, to match the twelve sons of Israel. Everything was neat and in order. And lifeless.

"So what do we do now?" John wanted to know. "Should we put up a monument or something? People are already starting to forget that Jesus even existed."

"Yeah," Philip agreed, but there was no enthusiasm in his voice. "Maybe we could collect some money and put up a monument. A statue of Jesus. Or something."

The gloom hung like a damp cloud over the disciples – the women and men who were gathered together – the rag-tag group of people who had known Jesus, who had loved him, who had heard his voice, had felt and seen the hope for a new way of living together in love. And then had watched him die. Some had seen a resurrected Jesus, but the others didn't really believe their story. Now they were together, a kind of memorial society for Jesus of Nazareth. Somehow it seemed important to stay together, but nobody really knew why.

TWO: It's stifling in here!

ONE: Peter gave Mary an annoyed look as she got up to open the window. A cool breeze came in, along with the sounds of singing from nearby homes celebrating Pentecost. The breeze cooled Mary's face. That helped a little.

TWO: *begins to hum the tune of Psalm 104 Rise up O my Soul*

ONE: Mary began to sing. She sang an old song she had known since her childhood, a song she had often sung with Mary the mother of Jesus.

Piano joins the humming. Humming turns into singing, singing builds in intensity.

TWO: *(Psalm 104 with words adapted for the Magnificat)*

Rise up, rise up, rise up O my soul!

Rise up my soul and magnify your Saviour

Rise up, rise up, rise up O my soul!

Rise up my soul and magnify your God!

Accompaniment builds then suddenly becomes quiet for the following:

ONE: She sang quietly at first, humming some of the parts, then louder, and it seemed that as she sang, the breeze from the window became stronger, blowing back her head-dress, teasing her hair, lifting her spirit. She sang in a full-bodied contralto, a voice she hadn't used since that terrible day she watched her dearest friend cough and wretch and bleed and die.

*Piano accompaniment to Psalm 104 ends on bar *, turns into a B7th chord and begins a*

light and effervescent boom-chuck accompaniment to "Christ is Risen from the Dead" (Voices United 167)

TWO (*singing*): "God has kept this word to Is'rael, Glory! Hallelujah!
Made to Abraham and to Sarah, Glory! Hallelujah!

Promised all of the people, Glory! Hallelujah!
Promised all of the people, Glory! Hallelujah!

Christ is risen from the dead, Glory! Hallelujah!"

Music carries on in the background, as before.

ONE: "You're changing the words!" grumped Peter. "Sarah's not in the song!"

TWO: (*laughter in her voice*) She is now!

ONE: Mary hadn't felt herself smile for so long, and it felt so good. She sang the song, with her own new words, all over again, louder than before, and some of the other women joined in.

Music accompaniment continues to build. Narration has to compete with it a bit:

ONE: And the next thing they knew, they were dancing.

They were dancing out the pent-up anger and grief and frustration and confusion. They were dancing out the hope, the tiny, fragile hope they still had in spite of all that had happened.

They danced and they sang, and the men at first disapproved, then began to smile, then some of them joined in the singing and the dancing. Even Peter couldn't sustain his grump. Even big, flat-footed Peter danced an awkward, joyful kind of dance and sang loudly off-key.

And the wind picked up and blew hard through the room. They opened other windows; they sang more and more loudly and danced their hearts out. Something was happening. Something electric. Something crackling with energy. Something had taken hold of their spirits and was moving them, motivating them.

Faces appeared at the windows. The door was opened. Curious neighbours looked in – neighbours and their guests who had gathered from everywhere for the feast of Pentecost. They saw the dancing and the singing, and ecstatic, laughter-filled attempts to explain to the neighbors what was happening, when nobody really knew what was happening. There were tears and there was laughter and the dancing got faster and the singing got louder until everyone collapsed into an exhausted, happy heap.

Music ends (with a nice sustain).

ONE: "They're drunk!" sneered one of the neighbours at the door.

"Ooo, no! Not drunk. Not drunk at all," laughed Peter, who in the end had danced as hard and sung as loudly as anyone. "At least, not drunk on wine. Sit down folks, and I'll tell you what's going on."

"Do you remember the prophet Joel," he asked. The neighbours nodded. Of course. "Joel prophesied that the Spirit of God would be poured out on all people. 'Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,' Joel said. And that's what you saw.

"Jesus of Nazareth. Do you remember him? He was killed. He was crucified. But he promised he would send the Spirit again in a new way. Well, this is it, folks. This is IT!"

Accompaniment begins to an upbeat Pentecost song/hymn such as Ron Klusmeier's "Come, O Holy Spirit, More Voices 23.

And Peter began to dance again; to dance and to sing with a slow, awkward, passionate grace, with intensity and power and with a brightness in his eyes that literally sent shivers through the folks standing by.

ONE: They tried many times to describe what happened that Pentecost day. Some said they saw tongues of flame dancing over their heads. Others remembered speaking in strange tongues, or singing in strange tongues which everyone seemed to understand. Sometimes they would even get to arguing about what happened that day.

TWO: My friends! Does it matter? We know the Holy Spirit came to us that day and filled us with excitement and love and passion. That's the part that's important. The Holy Spirit can come in a hundred different ways to all different people. It doesn't matter how. It only matters that we're open to the Spirit. And that we respond with our lives."

Accompaniment builds until all sing Pentecost song/hymn

**Ralph Milton has written a number of books,
all of them available through Wood Lake Publishing.
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