

TURN TO St. Mary Magdalene and St. Cleopas AS SPIRITUAL GUIDES THIS SEASON

Embracing the Lenten season as a means to spiritually prepare myself for the celebration of Easter has always been so important to me.

Over the years, I've come to realize that one of my favorite ways to do this is by diving deep into the experiences of those who walked alongside Jesus during His public ministry, the concluding days of His earthly sojourn and were witnesses to His Resurrection.

This beautiful practice opens up the Gospel story in a whole new way for me. I find it not only broadens my understanding of the Easter story, but also serves as a wellspring of inspiration to shape my life after the incredible examples set by the early Christians and the first disciples.

As we journey through Lent and look forward with anticipation to the Easter season, I invite you to join me in allowing St. Mary Magdalene and St. Cleopas to be our spiritual guides.



Caitlin Bean received her master's degree in theology from the University of Notre Dame and a bachelor's degree in English from Plymouth State University. You can read more of Caitlin's writing at caitlinsica.com.

Let us pray

St. Mary Magdalene, inspire us to be seekers of truth and messengers of hope. Guide us in our relationship with Jesus, that we, too, may recognize His voice when He calls us by name.



ST. MARY MAGDALENE

In *John 20:1-18*, a beautiful description of St. Mary Magdalene is laid out, one that is both poignant and significant.

Arriving at the tomb in the early morning hours of Sunday, presumably to finish anointing Jesus' body, St. Mary Magdalene discovers the stone rolled away and His body missing.

This empty tomb, though not proof in and of itself, is an essential sign of the Resurrection — the crowning truth of our faith.

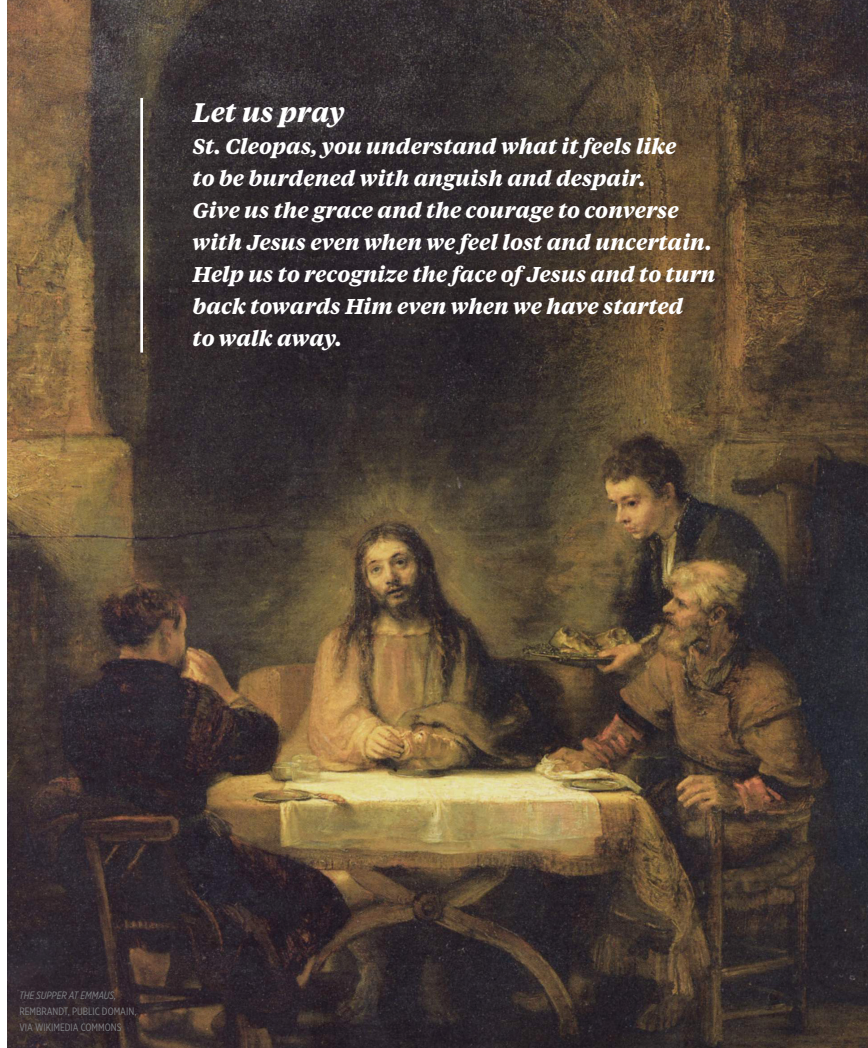
Yet, initially, Mary is gripped with sorrow because she fears for the worst, that His body has been stolen.

However, her encounter with angels and, ultimately, with the risen Christ, marks a pivotal moment of recognition and transformation. St. Mary Magdalene's devotion and love for Jesus is palpable. Her recognition of Him at the sound of Him speaking her name conveys the deeply personal nature of her faith.

Jesus entrusts her with the mission of delivering the extraordinary news to the disciples. Thus, St. Mary Magdalene not only becomes the first to witness the Resurrected Lord, but becomes a messenger of joy, hope and redemption.



ALEXANDER IWANOV - CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO MARY MAGDALENE AFTER THE RESURRECTION, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



THE SUPPER AT EMMAUS, REMBRANDT, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Let us pray

St. Cleopas, you understand what it feels like to be burdened with anguish and despair. Give us the grace and the courage to converse with Jesus even when we feel lost and uncertain. Help us to recognize the face of Jesus and to turn back towards Him even when we have started to walk away.

ST. CLEOPAS

On the morning of the Resurrection, two disciples found themselves in the depths of despair, walking away from Jerusalem towards Emmaus.

Jesus encountered them, but perhaps because they were so stricken with grief and disbelief, they did not recognize Him.

Ever patient, Jesus asked them what had happened. Incredulous, St. Cleopas responded, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” (*Lk 24:18*)

Jesus then gives them the space to recount what they have experienced. After listening to them, he challenges their faith, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?” (*Lk 24:18*)

Jesus then proceeds to interpret all that Scripture had foretold of Him and still St. Cleopas and the other disciple do not recognize Him. But their hearts begin to be moved, they are drawn to His presence and invite Jesus to stay with them and share a meal.

At dinner, Jesus takes bread, breaks it, blesses it and then vanishes. It is at this point that the disciples

recognize their Lord, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (*Lk 24: 32*)

Immediately, St. Cleopas and the other disciple, bolstered by hope, return to Jerusalem and tell the disciples what had occurred.

The Resurrection is the Good News that God had promised for generations. In this, death and sin are defeated. In this, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “All truths, even those most inaccessible to human reason, find their justification.”

St. Mary Magdalene and the holy women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus, as well as the Apostles, were the primary witnesses of this miraculous day.

May we, like these first witnesses, continue to be bearers of the Gospel message, living each day with joy, so that others may come to know our Lord. ■