

The women who stayed

The women were the ones who stayed. I regret to say that I missed this for most of my life.

I don't just mean that I missed this in Scripture, although it took me decades to realize that women stayed at the foot of the cross when almost all the men fled — or that women were the first to discover the Resurrection in every Gospel.

I mean that I missed it everywhere. The truth that women's work and witness are too often overlooked and unseen.

I'm embarrassed to admit that I didn't grasp this reality until I became a mother. Until the hard but holy work of parenting made me realize how much faithful love and service from women had made my life possible.

How my mom sacrificed late nights and early mornings to care for her five children. How my aunts gave countless hours to tend to my grandparents at the end of their lives. How my teachers, coaches, doctors, professors and employers — women who helped to shape me into the woman I am — have done their work with the same faithful commitment.

The women stayed at the foot of the cross. They did not desert Jesus. They cared for his beaten, bloody body. They went in the dark to anoint him at the tomb with oil and spices. They stayed faithful to the daily, loving work of caring for others in body and soul.

During this Easter season, the women have settled into my heart and refused to leave. Mary Magdalene and Mary his mother: bearer of good news and bearer of God. Joanna, Salome, Mary the mother of James, and all the unnamed women: the ones who stayed by the cross and the ones who went to the tomb.

The women of the Resurrection have led me to ask how I can stay faithful — to my family, to my work and to all the places I have been called.

Throughout human history, women have often been in the shadows, not the

spotlight. They showed up on the margins but didn't get to write the stories.

Yet every Gospel tells of their faithfulness at the end. How did I miss this?

Because, quite frankly, I missed how the women stayed in my life, too.

Now I'm trying to notice them everywhere. The women who stay after dinner and do the dishes. The women who stay after Mass and set the hymnals straight. The women who stay after class with the student who's struggling. The women who stay up late with the teenager who needs to talk. The women who stay at the bedside after everyone else has left the hospital room.

They are Mary and Joanna and Mary Magdalene and Salome. They are every unnamed woman in the Gospels, every friend of our Lord whose story was never told. They are the saints we know and love. They are the reason many of us have faith in the first place — because our mother or grandmother or godmother or aunt or teacher or sister taught us first.

The world spins on, but the women stay. Imagine how different the story might have been if the women had not gone to the tomb while others slept, had not discovered the body gone, had not listened to the angels or had not run to tell the stunning news of Christ's resurrection that changed everything.

From birth to death, women are called to stay faithful — then and now.

We would not be here without them.

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