

Magdalen Community at Rothko Chapel

Sunday, April 30, 2006, 10:00 a.m.

The Magdalen Community is a connective community seeking conversation and dialogue with other spiritualities and religious traditions.

Opening Music

Haec Dies by William Byrd (1543–1623)

Haec dies quam fecit Dominus: exultemus et laetemur in ea. Alleluia.

(This is the day which the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it. Alleluia.)

Call to Silence and Opening Meditation

Opening Greeting

Solo: Peace Be With You.

Unison: Acquire My Peace within you.

Opening Dialogue

Solo: Where are you from?

Unison: We have come from the place where light is produced from itself.

Solo: Where is that place?

Unison: It's a mystery.

Solo: But can you say you image the light?

Unison: Yes, indeed. We carry the light within.

Solo: And the peace?

Unison: Yes, also the peace.

Solo: How do you know of such light and such peace?

Unison: The sign is the feeling.

The sign is the movement from within.

The sign is the passion for the well-being of all.

Solo: What are your other signs?

Unison: Our recognitions of injustice and hatred and oppression throughout the globe, of power struggles and violence that seem unending.

Solo: Can we turn those around?

Unison: We must seek to do so.

Solo: Are you willing to spread your light and your peace?

Unison: We are eager to spread them.
They spread just as love spreads.

Unison: But some people are not aware of it.

Solo: Yet you are aware.

Unison: Yes, indeed.
We are aware of the light and the movement and the peace.
And we cannot stand back.
We will step forward.
We will overcome the violence, the domination, the hatred,
and spread love.

Readings and Call to Conversation

A Reading from Hebrew Scripture: Genesis 1:26–27; Genesis 2:15–24; Genesis 3:1–7

Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’

Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

*'This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;*

this one shall be called Woman,

for out of Man this one was taken.'

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die."' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Midrash On Genesis by Sandy Supowit

Eve Tells Her Granddaughters about the Tree

Colors were brighter then, newer, and at twilight when I walked alone through the garden, the crimson sky patterned the ground with red-gold bars between the long, black shadows of the tree trunks. It was a time of absolutes-light and darkness, good and evil, partnership and loneliness. I was already pregnant, my belly just beginning to swell like the fruit on the widespread branches all around me. She welcomed me with open arms, that tree, and every evening I would lean in close and we would whisper to each other. I would inhale the musky scent of her sappy bark and I would hear her gentle laughter in the leaves. We shared the secrets of our ripening. She was my best friend, my only friend, as Adam had become a distant, dutiful employee doing every task to tight-lipped perfection, joylessly. We had only three commandments then, and two of them concerned ruling and subduing, something Adam took very seriously. My job was done, as far as I was concerned, in just being fruitful. And so you see, that tree and I were kindred spirits-two quiet, brooding females singing in the deepening dusk, girlfriends.

Adam was content, I think, to continue in that garden forever because he didn't feel the thrill of change the way I did. It was a part of me the way it is a part of you, a part of all females, the way rising and falling is part of the ocean tides or the way the moon's face turns first toward us and then away. Change called to me in the song of that tree. I wanted to understand it and so I took that first bite, took it boldly and without hesitation, and I knew by the sharp sweetness that flooded my mouth that I had done a good thing, a natural

thing, an honorable thing. I say the taste of that forbidden fruit was sharp because it cut through everything and made a great divide between before and after, between wondering and knowing, between the status quo and a hundred million possibilities. Adam never hesitated either, though he may say he did, but when he tasted what I gave him, his eyes did not go round with wonder as mine had done, no. His eyes squeezed shut and I saw the world's first tear fall even as he let out the breath he never knew he had been holding. And one more thing-there never was a snake. Adam may have thought he saw one slithering away, but I believe that what he saw for the first time were those bars of brightness and shadow in the twilight like a prison door swinging open. There were only three of us-me, the man, the tree-and a distant sound like thunder, as Adam would say, like something heavy crashing down around us, or, as I remember it, applause.

A Reading from The Gospel of Mary Magdalen

Then Peter said to him, "You have been explaining every topic to us; tell us one other thing. What is the sin of the world?"

The Savior replied, "There is no such thing as sin; rather you yourselves are what produces sin when you act in accordance with the nature of adultery, which is called 'sin.' For this reason, the Good came among you, pursuing (the good) which belongs to every nature. It will set it within its root."

Then he continued. He said, "This is why you get si[c]k and die: because [you love] what de[c]ei[ve]s [you]. [Anyone who] thinks should consider (these matters)!"

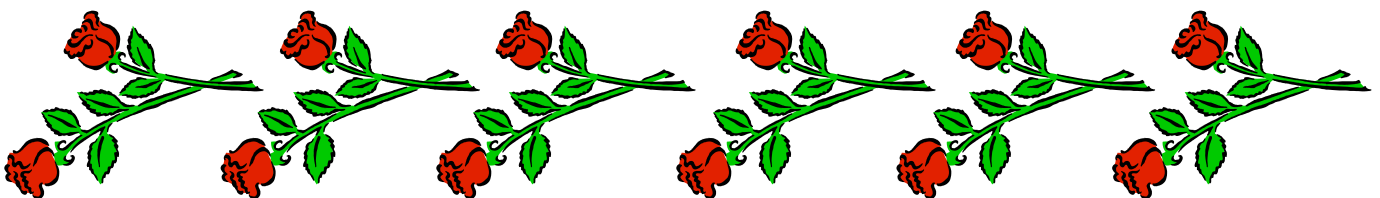
"[Ma]tter gav[e bi]rth to a passion which has no Image because it derives from what is contrary to nature. A disturbing confusion then occurred in the whole body. That is why I told you, 'Become content at heart, while also remaining discontent and disobedient; indeed become contented and agreeable (only) in the presence of that other Image of nature.' Anyone with two ears capable of hearing should listen!"

When the Blessed One had said these things, he greeted them all. "Peace be with you!" he said. "Acquire my peace within yourselves!"

"Be on your guard so that no one deceives you by saying, 'Look over here!' or 'Look over there!' For the child of true Humanity exists within you. Follow it! Those who search for it will find it.

"Go then, preac[h] the good news about the Realm. [Do] not lay down any rule beyond what I determined for you, nor promulgate law like the lawgiver, or else you might be dominated by it."

After he had said these things, he departed from them.



A Poem by António Machado

*The wind, one brilliant day, called
to my soul with an odor of jasmine.*

*"In return for the odor of my jasmine,
I'd like all the odor of your roses."*

*"I have no roses. All the flowers
in my garden are dead."*

*"Well then I'll take the withered petals,
and the yellow leaves, and the waters of the
fountain."*

*The wind left...and I wept, and I said to myself,
"What have you done with the garden that was
entrusted to you?"*

Closing Music

Haec Dies (William Byrd)

Closing Dialogue

Solo: Are you aware of the light and the peace within you?

*Unison: We have the feeling and the movement,
The passion for the well-being of all.*

*Solo: Light spreads, just as love spreads.
Are you willing to speak your feeling of light?*

*Unison: Yes, indeed, we must speak the feeling.
We must act the peace.*

*Solo: Then let us practice the feeling.
Let us practice the action of peace.*

*Unison: Let us dance the feeling.
Let us dance the peace.
Let us dance from the light.*

*Solo: Let us move together
In the light and the peace.*

Unison: Let us go forth in the power of the Spirit.

*For more information about the Magdalen Community, please contact Bridgitt Ayers,
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