

The Conversation

by [Gary Percesepe](#) in the [January 2025](#) issue

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Early the next morning we walk the ruins of the Temple.

Mortals win the kind of eternity for which their lives prepare them, I told Jesus,
quoting,
I think, Socrates.

Someone once said to me, But first let me bury my father.
Let the dead bury the dead, I told *that* mortal.

A sickening smell of sweet metallic blood mixed with goat urine caused us to cover
our faces.

The ground ran dark with blood like hot tears. Sunlight shone on limestone walls
where the rope
of destiny had been pulled tight.

In bad times it makes sense to talk to unusual women, Jesus says.
Have you known any? I ask.

Mary Magdalene, Jesus says. The saint. Saints are difficult to live with.
They remind you of the gaping void which makes you capable of sin.

We stepped over an abandoned cook fire in the courtyard.

The void makes mortals capable of sins, yet all sins are attempts to fill voids.
Mary told me this.

I thought that was Simone Weil?

Another saint, Jesus yawns. You're new to this. In time you'll learn to ignore the
tenses.

We walked until the centuries bled, each a rotted tooth violently extracted.
My tongue touched each declivity.

A choir of women sang of grace to fill the empty spaces, galaxies of grace. They sang to me, then vanished again.

Yet grace itself makes this void, the women had sung. I tell Jesus this.

Jesus nods, rights an upturned table.