

Building a Church for Our Daughters



St. Mary of Magdala Proclaiming the Resurrection. Margaret Beaudette, SC. 2014. Used with Permission.

Dear Friend of St. Mary of Magdala,

Enclosed is everything you need (and perhaps more) to celebrate the feast of St. Mary of Magdala this year.

Theme for 2016: In the spirit of St. Mary of Magdala, who played a key role in building the Church for future generations, this year's theme is *"Building a Church for Our Daughters."*

This year, we are inviting you to:

Celebrate the Feast Day of St. Mary of Magdala (July 22nd) with the theme, "Building a Church for our Daughters." A sample prayer service is included in this pack for your adaptation and use. More information about our theme is included in this pack.

Promote the message and work of the "A Church for Our Daughters" campaign. You can learn more about this work by visiting www.achurchforourdaughters.org. Specifically, we are asking you to invite those who attend your celebration to consider signing the petition, which is based on the Declaration for Our Daughters (also included in this packet).

Engage the young Catholic women in your lives in your celebration. This year, we are asking you to invite and encourage those who will be celebrating with you to invite young Catholic women in your lives to join you at your Mary of Magdala celebrations. These may be students, friends, daughters, granddaughters, nieces, Goddaughters, etc. You may also consider hosting a listening session as part of your celebration or invite a young Catholic woman/women to play visible roles in or preach at your Mary of Magdala celebrations.

Invite your bishop to dialogue about "building a church for our daughters" (a sample invitation is included in this packet).

If we can be of any help to you as you plan your Mary of Magdala Celebration, please do not hesitate to be in touch by email to russ@futurechurch.org or by calling 216.228.0869

Sincerely,

Russ Petrus
Program Director

Deb Rose-Milavec
Executive Director

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Mary of Magdala
Jesus and Women
Women in the Ministry of St. Paul
Catholic Women Who Changed the World

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Building a Church for Our Daughters

ABOUT OUR THEME: BUILDING A CHURCH FOR OUR DAUGHTERS

Our Foremothers in Faith

Throughout history, women have played an important role in the building up of the Church.

Certainly, Mary of Magdala played a unique role in both the Jesus movement and in the early Church. All four Gospels show Mary as a primary witness to the most central events of Christian faith. Luke 8:1-3 tells us that Mary traveled with Jesus in the Galilean discipleship and, with Joanna and Susanna, supported his mission from her own financial resources. In the synoptic gospels, Mary leads the group of women who witness Jesus' death, burial, the empty tomb and his Resurrection – contrasting their courageous faithfulness with the male disciples' abandonment of Jesus. John's gospel names Mary of Magdala as the first to discover the empty tomb and shows the Risen Christ sending her to announce the Good news of his Resurrection to the other disciples, prompting early church Fathers to name her "the Apostle to the Apostles." Finally, extra-canonical Christian writings show Christian communities growing up around Mary's ministry. (See included resource on Mary of Magdala for more information).

Other women clearly played an important role in the building of the early Church alongside of St. Paul: notably Phoebe, the deacon, who delivered the Letter to the Romans (Romans 16). But also Lydia, a leader in the Church at Philippi

who offered hospitality to Paul and Timothy (Acts 16:13-15, 40); Euodia and Synthyche, who seem to have been leaders of house churches in Philippi (Phil 1:1); Prisca (Romans 16; 1 Cor 16:19; Acts 18:26; 2 Tim. 4:19); Junia (Rom. 16:7); Maria, Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis (Romans 16); and Apphia (Philemon). (See included resource on The Women in the Ministry of Paul for more information).

They are of course joined by women like Perpetua, Macrina, Theodora Episcopa, Lucilla, Leta Presbyteria, Hild of Whitby, Leoba, Julian of Norwich, Hildegard of Bingen, The Beguines, Claire of Assisi, Catherine of Siena, Joan of Arc, and Teresa of Avila. And more recently Dorothy Day and Thea Bowman (see included resource "Catholic Women Who Changed the World for more information).

Indeed, women have been the mainstay of the Church. They are "more religious" than men by every standard measure. They attend services more often, pray more often and carry out the work of the Church. For centuries, the Catholic Church has relied on women who have engaged in the mission of the Gospel in their parishes, entered religious life at more than double the rate of their male counterparts, and today make up 80% of the Church's non-ordained workforce.

Women Today

Yet, today, all of that is changing.

"Unlike their grandmothers and mothers, Catholic women born after Vatican II seem less willing to give the institutional church the benefit of the doubt and to stay loyal to the Church and Catholicism while hoping for change"

American Catholics in Transition

Emerging research shows that women's centuries-long loyalty to the Church can no longer be taken for granted: "Unlike their grandmothers and mothers, Catholic women born after Vatican II seem less willing to give the institutional church the benefit of the doubt and to stay loyal to the Church and Catholicism while hoping for change" (D'Antonio, Dillon, and Gautier in *American Catholics in Transition*, pp. 96-97).

In fact, according to socialist Sr. Patricia Wittberg, "An analysis of the General Social Surveys (GSS) from 2002 -2012 shows that the likelihood of exiting Catholicism altogether is greater among young adult Catholic women than it is among Catholic men their age (Patricia Wittberg in "The Alienation of Millennial Catholic Women").

American Catholics in Transition names three key indicators which show a significant shift in the commitment to Catholicism of all women, especially as compared to men: frequency of Mass attendance, the importance of the Church in their lives, and their sense of whether they would ever leave the Church (pp. 90-92).

Mass attendance: While Mass attendance by men has dropped only slightly over the last 25 or so years (35% in 1987 to 30% in 2011) Mass attendance by women has fallen dramatically (52% to 31% in the same time period).

The importance of the Church in their lives: While the rate of men responding that the Church is among the most important part of their lives has remained steady (35% in 1987 to 35% in 2011), the rate of women responding that the Church is among the most important part of their lives has fallen dramatically (58% to 38%).

Sense of whether they would ever

Gender Differences Among Millennial Catholics in Attachment to Catholicism

(Percentages Strongly Agreeing to the Following Statements)

	Women		Men	
	Non-Hispanic %	Hispanic %	Non-Hispanic %	Hispanic %
Being Catholic is an important part of who I am	18	52	34	30
Church among the most important parts of my life	22	46	33	37
I cannot imagine being anything other than Catholic	20	44	33	36
Important that younger generations of my family grow up Catholic	28	56	39	46

leave the Church: 61% of women in 1987 agreed with the statement "I would never leave the Catholic Church." In 2011, that number went down to 56%. (In men, the number agreeing actually rose from 50% to 55%)

Our Daughters

A closer look at data pertaining to just the Millennial generation (table above) reveals that while the Millennial generation as a whole is significantly less devout than their elders, "non-Hispanic millennial women stand out for their disengagement from and indifference toward Catholicism" (148).

While Hispanic millennial women are the most highly committed to the Church of their generation, Patricia Wittberg warns that "Millennial Hispanics are also assimilating to the larger American culture...Relying on Hispanic Catholics to replace non-Hispanic Catholic defections would seem to be a temporary reprieve at best for American Catholicism."

To be sure, the steep decline in women's level of commitment and loyalty to the Church over time is a complex issue and there are many factors that appear to be driving it: "Among these are issues of cultural and generational change, spiritual ferment, advances in

women's equality in other institutional spheres, women's comparatively greater disaffection with Vatican authority and the Church's teachings on sexuality, as well as the lingering fallout from the sex abuse crisis (D'Antonio, Dillon, Gautier p. 104-105).

A Church For Our Daughters

Yet, there is still time to build a Church for our daughters: for Millennial women, their daughters, and indeed all women. FutureChurch is pleased to be working with our partners in the Church renewal movement to call on our bishops join us in building a Church for our daughters. www.achurchforourdaughters.org. And as we turn our attention toward celebrating the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala, we invite you to join us and gather

in thanksgiving for and celebration of the women who came before us – our foremothers in faith -- whose too often forgotten stories instruct and inspire us

in solidarity with the women of today whose demands for justice and inclusion call us to conversation.

and in hope for our daughters, the next generation, whose God-given possibility and potential compels us to build a Church for Our Daughters.



Building a Church for Our Daughters

RESOURCES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Regardless of how you celebrate, consider having the following resources (included in this packet) available for your participants.

1. Mary of Magdala Brochure
2. Jesus and Women
3. Women in the Ministry of St. Paul
4. Catholic Women Who Changed the World
5. About Our Theme: Building a Church for Our Daughters
6. Cards with information about www.achurchforourdaughters.org
7. Template for invitation to dialogue for bishops
8. Find more resources at www.futurechurch.org

OPTIONS FOR CELEBRATING THE FEAST OF SAINT MARY OF MAGDALA THIS YEAR

Liturgical Celebration Only

- we invite you to use or adapt the enclosed prayer service
- we encourage you to personally invite and include young Catholic women (your daughters, granddaughters, nieces, Goddaughters, etc.) in your celebration. Some suggestions include: inviting them assist with the planning, leading the music, to read the readings, offer their reflections on the Church at the time for preaching, or reading the petitions.

Liturgical Celebration Celebration & Presentation

- see suggestions for the celebration above (Celebration only)
- Consider inviting a local young Catholic woman or someone who works with young Catholic women to present on the topic “Building a Church for our Daughters.” You might turn to your local Catholic college or high school’s theology or campus ministry department; your parish’s youth or young adult minister.
- Consider choosing one or two of the bullet points from the *Declaration for Our Daughters* and invite a local scholar to present or speak on that particular bullet point. (The *Declaration for Our Daughters* is included in this pack).

Celebration and Discussion/Listening Session

- We suggest that you plan to host the discussion/listening session after the celebration for a few reasons 1. the celebration – particularly the preaching – may help facilitate your listening session by raising some issues the women in attendance may want to address or by raising questions they had not necessarily considered in the past and 2. by hosting the listening session following the celebration you have more flexibility when it comes to timing so that the listening session feels neither rushed nor drawn out
- Consider having refreshments during the session
- See the included resources on hosting your discussion/listening session

CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF SAINT MARY OF MAGDALA

Building a Church for Our Daughters

July 2016

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Suggested Opening Songs:

A Place at the Table music by Lori True, text by Shirley Erena Murray

© 1998, Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, IL, 60188; 2001, GIA Publications, Inc.

All are Welcome by Marty Haugen

© 1994, GIA Publications, Inc.

Gather Us In by Marty Haugen

© 1983, GIA Publications, Inc.

Sign of the Cross and Sign of Peace

LEADER: *(while making the sign of the Cross):*

The grace of Jesus, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

ALL: And also with you

LEADER: Let us welcome one another with a sign of peace.

Call to Prayer:

LEADER: In every generation, like Mary of Magdala, women have and continue to faithfully and generously respond to the call to serve God and God's holy people. They have been apostles and disciples, leaders, preachers, educators, counselors, musicians, artists, writers, comforters, pastoral ministers, chaplains and yes, priestly people offering their gifts to the Body of Christ.

Yet, our Church now suffers a poverty of spirit brought about by the exclusion of women from full participation in the life, ministry, and leadership of the church.

Today, we women and men, sisters and brothers, grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles, mothers and fathers, godparents – members of the Body of Christ -- gather together as one family to pray for a Church, modeled on the inclusive practices of Jesus and Saint Paul, that is truly alive with the gifts, spirit and potential of all its members.

SIDE A: We gather in thanksgiving for and celebration of Mary of Magdala and countless other women who came before us – our foremothers in faith -- whose too often forgotten stories instruct and inspire us.

SIDE B: We gather in solidarity with the women of today whose demands for justice and inclusion call us to conversation.

ALL: We gather in hope for our daughters, the next generation, whose God-given possibility and potential compels us to work for a Church for Our Daughters.

Opening Prayer:

LEADER: Let us pray

Good and Loving God, Creator of women and men in your own image,

ALL: Create in us and in our Church a desire for the wholeness you planned;

LEADER: Word made flesh and born of a woman,

ALL: Empower us that we, like Mary of Magdala, may hear and proclaim Your redeeming truth

LEADER: Spirit companion of women throughout space and time,

ALL: Guide us as we work to build a Church for our daughters, AMEN.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Option One

a liturgy of the Word with intergenerational readings written by and about women (all of these readings are on the following pages)

1st Reading: From: “It’s Not All About Eve: Women in the Lectionary” by Christine Schenk, in *Catholic Women Speak*. Edited by the Catholic Women Speak Network. Copyright © 2015 Catholic Women Speak Network. Used with permission.

2nd Reading: From: “Young Catholic Women Working in Ministry” by Rhonda Miska, in *Catholic Women Speak*. Edited by the Catholic Women Speak Network. Copyright © 2015 Catholic Women Speak Network. Used with permission.

3rd Reading: From: “Confessions” by Gina Messina-Dysert in *Faithfully Feminist*. Edited by Gina Messina-Dysert, Jennifer Zobair, and Amy Levin. Copyright © 2015 by I Speak for Myself, Inc. Used with permission.

Gospel: JN 20:1-18

Option Two

a liturgy of the Word using the lectionary readings for the day (please consider using the texts as translated in *The Inclusive Language Bible*)

1st Reading: JER 3:14-17

Responsorial Psalm: JER 31:10, 11-12ABCD, 13

Gospel: JN 20:1-18

Preaching Ideas

Consider inviting someone to preach on “A Church for Our Daughters” and how the model of Mary of Magdala’s own participation in the Jesus Movement and Early Church might help us to build such a Church today.

- You might consider inviting someone in your community who works with young women, such as a campus minister from a local college or high school or a youth/young adult minister from your or a nearby parish to share on their experience of young women in the Church.
- You could also invite a young woman/women from your community to speak on the topic
- Finally, anyone from any generation could preach on what kind of Church they desire for our “daughters”

Optional Sung Response

After the preaching, it would be appropriate to incorporate a song appropriate to the theme. Consider using one of the options listed as a suggested opening hymn in this prayer service.

A Reading by Christine Schenk in Catholic Women Speak

Contemporary biblical scholarship has uncovered important roles held by women in the early Jesus movement. Luke tells us that Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Susanna and many other women accompanied Jesus and ministered with him in Galilee. Yet this Lukan reading is rarely heard on Sunday. Mary of Magdala's commissioning to "go and tell my brothers" that Jesus has risen does not appear on Easter or on any Sunday in the Easter Season in the United States but is relegated to Easter Tuesday.

St. Paul worked closely with women leaders like Phoebe, Junia, Lydia, and Prisca. Unfortunately, Romans 16, a passage that names ten women and identifies some of them as deacons, apostles, and coworkers, is never proclaimed on a Sunday. Nor are the accounts of women leaders in the Acts of the Apostles.

And where are the biblical stories of the strong women leaders of salvation history? Couldn't we include the story of Shiprah and Puah, the Hebrew midwives who saved a nation of boy children, perhaps even Moses, by defying Pharaoh's law to kill all male infants born to enslaved Hebrews?

Proclaiming Lectionary texts that exclude or distort the witness of women, particularly in a church where all priestly liturgical leadership is male, is dangerous for our daughters and our sons. Young girls can hardly avoid internalizing the notion that God must have created them less important than their brothers. If all-male liturgical leadership and Sunday Lectionary readings are subtly seeding subordination in our daughters, what is being planted in our sons?

From: "It's Not All About Eve: Women in the Lectionary" by Christine Schenk, in Catholic Women Speak. Edited by the Catholic Women Speak Network. Copyright © 2015 Catholic Women Speak Network. Used with permission.

A Reading by Rhonda Miska in Catholic Women Speak

As women raised in the 1970s and 1980s, we were taught that there was no limit to what we could be when we grew up. The Church is one of the last places where that rings false and where we struggle to be seen as what we are: professional Catholic women, serving in ministry. This tension becomes particularly clear in interfaith settings, working alongside women leaders in other traditions; do we “count” as clergy or not?

While I personally have never felt a call to ordination, I have seen peers (after much difficult discernment) seek ordination in other denominations. This is a tremendous loss to the Church because these are smart, committed, talented women. I trust their response to God’s call, yet it saddens me that they have to leave their tradition in order to serve.

We young Catholic women, hope for the acknowledgement of our dignity as women with a call to ministry and for the respect of our voices and experiences. The blessings that enlarge our hearts and the challenges that wound us are equally real. Many of us have been deeply formed in, and treasure the riches of, different streams of Catholic tradition – Franciscan, Ignatian, Dominican. As millennials in a postmodern world, we appreciate the deep, rich grounding our Catholic identity offers. We have been graced in our encounters with God mediated by the Church and treasure our calls. And yet our experiences of sexism and injustice within our Catholic identity create internal struggles. We hope our naming of that struggle can be heard and creatively engaged.

From: “Young Catholic Women Working in Ministry” by Rhonda Miska in Catholic Women Speak. Edited by the Catholic Women Speak Network. Copyright © 2015 Catholic Women Speak Network. Used with permission.

A Reading by Gina Messina Dysert in Faithfully Feminist

It was and is important to me that my daughter be raised within my community and with the same rituals, values, and teachings I learned because of my Catholic culture. Yet, I confess that I fear I am indoctrinating her into a tradition that will abuse her. And so, becoming a mother has led me to many questions about my faith and feminism, and thus, feeling the need for multiple confessions:

I confess that I wanted to claim the Spirit of Christ within myself and baptize my daughter.

I confess that I didn't.

I confess that I want my daughter to embrace our Catholic identity.

I confess that I fear being Catholic will make my daughter feel "less than" because of her gender.

I confess that it brings me joy to see my daughter make the sign of the cross.

I confess that it brings me sadness to see my daughter make the sign of the cross.

I confess that when my daughter talk about God "He" I correct her and tell her it is God "She."

I confess that I still imagine God as male.

I confess that my daughter told her teacher that Jesus was a woman.

I confess that I was embarrassed.

I confess that I posted a YouTube video of my daughter singing "Ordain a Lady."

I confess that I ignored my daughter when she asked me why there were no women priests at our church.

I confess that our family attends the same conservative Catholic church I grew up in.

I confess that attending the same conservative Catholic church I grew up in brings me comfort.

I confess that I enrolled my daughter in Catholic school.

I confess that I continue to struggle with having my daughter in Catholic School.

I confess, I am a Catholic feminist, and though some may not understand how these identities intersect, I cannot separate them. I am not one or the other. I am both. That being so, I am committed to change, to activism, and to giving my daughter both the beauty and comfort of family and tradition, and the empowerment and strength of feminism. With these intentions, I believe she will have a different experience, one that is not damaging or abuse, but that is just.

From: "Confessions" by Gina Messina-Dysert in Faithfully Feminist. Edited by Gina Messina-Dysert, Jennifer Zobair, and Amy Levin. Copyright © 2015 by I Speak for Myself, Inc. Used with permission.

REFLECTION AND RITUAL AFTER THE HOMILY

Set up for the reflection and ritual time

this ritual invites participants to consider the name or names of those “daughters” (again we mean more than biological daughters) on behalf of whom they commit to building a Church that is truly inclusive and alive with the gifts, spirit, and potential of all its members.

After given a moment for reflection, participants will be invited to write those names on a card and place those names somewhere within the liturgical space (in a basket, on a table, on a board so that all the names are visible, etc.). You might consider decorating the area with items like a candle, or pink carnations (the symbol of the Church for Our Daughters campaign)

For this you will need:

- Pens or pencils for each participant
- A card/sheet(s) for them to write on (a template is included in pack). Consider places card(s) within the worship aid (if you will be using one) or having these items at each seat.
- A place for participants to put the cards.
- Note: it may be advantageous to explain this part of the prayer service prior to beginning. This way, the giving of instructions does not disrupt the prayer and reflection of participants

LEADER: (In these or similar words) Today we gather and pray for a Church for Our Daughters. At this time, we ask you to consider the “daughters” in your life -- your daughters, granddaughters, goddaughters, neices, neighbors, students. Who are the women and girls benefit from a community of radical inclusion and justice, equality without qualification, and an institution that transforms oppression into love without bounds? (allow time for participants to write the name/names on the cards and take them to the designated place).

Optional Sung Response

At this time, it would be appropriate to offer musical response. You may choose a piece of music, perhaps instrumental, as participants reflect and write. Then once most or all of the participants have had an opportunity to bring their cards forward, invite them to join in song. Consider one of the songs suggested as an opening hymn (*A Place at the Table* would be particularly appropriate here) or some other song with the themes of justice, inclusion, welcome that is well-known to the community.

Once the song is finished, you will want to suggest ways that participants can follow through on their commitment to build a Church for our daughters. Some ideas include: signing the petition (you can make sheets available for them to sign or direct them to the website achurchforourdaughters.org), visiting the same website for information and opportunities, and inviting their bishop to dialogue with them on how -- together -- they can build a Church for our daughters.

Prayers of the Faithful **Here it would be appropriate to invite women – especially young women – to offer these prayers of petition...*

ALL RESPONSE: HEAR US, O GOD

LEADER: Inspired by the hope that these women and girls, our daughters, may know radical inclusion and justice, equality without qualification, and a Church institution that transforms oppression into love without bounds, we place our needs before our good and loving God.

For leaders of the institutional Church, that they may recognize that all people are created in God's image and strike down every oppressive practice, teaching, and law that assigns women and girls to a subordinate status. We pray:

For the Christian community, that we may come to know God and ourselves more deeply through spirituality, language, and imagery that is more fully representative of our inclusive God, we pray:

For those who work for justice for women in the world, that the Church may stand with them to build structures that support and sustain the basic needs of all including access to clean water, clean air, adequate housing, food, security, education, the workforce, political and social engagement, and freedom of movement, we pray:

For the poor and those most vulnerable, the majority of whom are women, that the Church may stand in solidarity with them and work to dismantle all structures, systems, customs, forces and manifestations of human oppression and exploitation, we pray:

For those in our communities who are marginalized by the institutional church because they are LGBTQ, belong to diverse families, have divorced, or follow their conscience on reproductive health; and for those whose voices have been silenced because they support women's equality in the Church including ordination. That they may come to know the Church as a place of radical inclusion that defers to the primacy of conscience; affirms the spirit of the divine in their identity, gifts, needs and dreams; and welcomes them to every table including the Eucharistic and decision-making tables, we pray:

For those who have died and particularly our foremothers in faith --those in Scripture, those in our tradition, and those who have walked with us in our time. That they're stories and witness may always be remembered, celebrated and honored and that they may know the peace of complete unity and wholeness with God, we pray:

For all of us gathered here, that our vocations and ministries, expertise and experience, and contributions of mind, body, and spirit may be welcomed and celebrated for the benefit of all God's children, we pray:

LEADER:

Loving God, Mother and Father,

We offer these prayers on behalf of our daughters -- indeed on behalf of all women -- confident in your endless and transformative love...

ALL: AMEN

CONCLUDING RITES

Closing Prayer:

LEADER: My friends, as we go forth into the world to help build a Church for our daughters, we reflect on the courage, faithfulness, and ministry of Mary of Magdala and call upon our good and loving God to bless us for the work ahead

LEADER: Mary of Magdala she followed Jesus, supporting his mission with all of her resources.

ALL: God who calls us by name, open us to receive your call and let us, like Mary of Magdala, put all we have at your service.

LEADER: Mary of Magdala traveled with Jesus and the other disciples in a small community, learning about God's new reign of justice and love.

ALL: God of Wisdom, lead us to that community of faith where we too can learn and grow.

LEADER: Mary and the other disciples persevered with Jesus, even when he was persecuted by his own religious leadership and government authorities.

ALL: God of Strength, help us stand in Jesus' truth and healing love especially when we experience persecution for justice's sake.

LEADER: Mary of Magdala remained at Jesus' side through feesome suffering, a brutal death and anonymous burial.

ALL: O God, who accompanies us when we suffer, give us the strength to accompany those who suffer in anyway.

LEADER: Mary of Magdala, Joanna, and the other women were called to be the first witnesses to the Resurrection.

ALL: Wisdom Spirit, help us recognize and accept our call to witness your power to bring life from death.

LEADER: Jesus sent Mary to proclaim the Good News to the Apostles even though they would not believe them.

ALL: Rabboni, teach us how to proclaim the miracle of your Risen love in a disbelieving world.

LEADER: Because of her witness, Mary of Magdala is known as the Apostle to the Apostles.

ALL: Help us, O God, to accept our apostolice call to go and tell our brothers and sisters of Jesus' power to heal, even wounded structures which exclude.

LEADER: Women were faithful disciples of Jesus and leaders in the early Christian communities.

ALL: Help us, Most Inclusive One, to reclaim our baptismal call to leadership.

LEADER: Today, women are called to discipleship and leadership in our Church and faith communities.

ALL: Healing Spirit, help our Church welcome the women leaders and ministers you send us today.

LEADER: That our daughters may know may know radical inclusion and justice, equality without qualification, and a Church institution that transforms oppression into love without bounds

ALL: Spirit of Transformation, guide us as we work to build a Church for our daughters.

Blessing:

LEADER: And may God bless us who is Source of all Being, Eternal Word, and Holy Spirit
ALL: AMEN.

Closing Song:

Choose a closing song that is well-known to the community so that all may sing along. Select a hymn with themes of discipleship, unity, community, mission, inclusion, and welcome.

After the prayer service is over, direct the attention of your participants to the materials you have placed at the entrance/exit of the prayer space. Resources you may wish to make available include: a copy of the Declaration for Our Daughters (along with sheets for signing), cards with information about the Church for Our Daughters website, and resources from FutureChurch (Mary of Magdala, Jesus and Women, Women in the Ministry of Paul, Catholic Women Who Changed the World).

CARDS FOR PRAYER SERVICE
(copy and cut)



So that

may know radical inclusion and justice, equality without qualification, and a Church institution that transforms oppression into love without bounds

I, _____, *commit to Building a Church for our Daughters.*



So that

may know radical inclusion and justice, equality without qualification, and a Church institution that transforms oppression into love without bounds

I, _____, *commit to Building a Church for our Daughters.*



Building a Church for Our Daughters

DECLARATION FOR OUR DAUGHTERS

We are women and men, sisters and brothers, grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles, mothers and fathers, godparents -- members of the Catholic community who are deeply committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and who believe the Body of Christ must include all genders equally. Today, we call on our Church leaders to work with us to build a Church that strikes down every oppressive practice, teaching, and law that assigns women and girls to a subordinate status. We call on our leaders to create a Church that is truly inclusive and alive with the gifts, spirit, and potential of all its members.

A Church for our daughters is a community that

- recognizes that all people are created in God's image and equally endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the common good.
- honors the vocations and ministries of all its members, fostering and welcoming all called to priesthood, diaconate, and liturgical leadership.
- opens its sacred sacraments to all, as nourishment and ritual without limitations based on gender or sexuality.
- celebrates the witness and contributions of our foremothers in faith – those in Scripture, those in our tradition, and those who walk with us today.
- affirms the spirit of the divine present in the gifts, needs, and dreams of all God's people.
- celebrates and promotes a spirituality that recognizes an inclusive God, beyond gender, and incorporates language that is inclusive and representative of God's feminine, masculine, and non-gendered attributes in liturgy, doctrine, and pastoral practice.
- honors women's moral agency to make decisions that impact their health and family life.
- takes a firm and proactive stand opposing all forms of exploitation and violence perpetrated against women.
- advocates for social structures that support and sustain the basic needs of women including access to clean water, clean air, adequate housing, food, security, education, the workforce, political and social engagement, and freedom of movement.
- advocates for education for all our children, but especially for our daughters around the world who face daily acts of discrimination and violence in their quest for knowledge.
- works to dismantle oppressive structures and customs that disproportionately impact women creating inequality in pay, employment opportunities, development of public policy, and property ownership.
- works to eradicate destructive forces that triply oppress women of color such as racism, religious intolerance, and unequal access to social goods.
- honors and justly compensates the contributions of women working in the Church including equal pay, equal access to job opportunities, healthcare, and paid family leave.
- seeks to be fully inclusive and representative of women and to integrate their wisdom and insights in all areas of Church life including governance, decision-making, teaching, theological reflection, and canon law.
- commits to reflect on its own participation in the oppression of women; to repent for unjust acts, systems, and teaching; and to renew structures of leadership to be more inclusive of the People of God at every level.

We pray together as a family of the faithful with the vision of a Church community that at its core upholds the full equality of all of its members. So that our daughters and yours may know radical inclusion and justice, equality without qualification, and an institution that transforms oppression into love without bounds, let us build a Church for our daughters.



Building a Church for Our Daughters

GUIDE TO DISCUSSING THE DECLARATION FOR OUR DAUGHTERS

Environment and Hospitality

Be sure to create an environment that is well-suited for conversation and dialogue. If you expect a smaller group of participants, consider setting the room up in a circle so that all can see each other and speak with one another. If you expect a larger group, you may consider setting up tables of five or six for small group discussion.

Before beginning the conversation, you might consider taking time to allow participants to get to know one another. A few simple questions might help facilitate this: your name, your parish or faith community, and why you came today are all good questions for breaking the ice.

After everyone has had a chance to meet and greet one another, pass out copies of the Declaration for Our Daughters. The Declaration is short enough that you could allow either time to quietly read independently or time to read out-loud together. If you are taking RSVPs for your event, you might also consider emailing the Declaration to participants ahead of time or directing them to <http://achurchforourdaughters.org/declaration> so they can read and consider the Declaration before arriving at the gathering.

If this discussion is taking place independent of a liturgical celebration, be sure to pray before and after the discussion. Consider using any part of the included celebration (The Call to Prayer and Opening Prayer and the Closing Prayer would work well).

Suggested Questions for Discussion

These suggested questions are a guide. You/your group may find some questions more compelling than others. Therefore don't feel concerned to take time to ask and answer all of them. The hope is to create a discussion and dialogue, not a "round robin" opportunity to answer questions. You may also have some different questions that you'd like to ask.

How have you personally – or through the experience of a loved one – experienced gender injustice in the Roman Catholic Church. How does this impact you? your faith life? your sense of the community/the global Church?

In what ways have you noticed or felt the impact of the increased detachment from the institutional Church of the young Catholic women and girls in your life or community?

In what ways have you personally detached from the institutional life of the Church because of your experiences, its practices, or its teachings?

Of the bullet points in the declaration, which one(s) are you most passionate about? Why? How could the Church go about making the vision articulated in that particular bullet point(s) a reality?

What Scripture passages, Gospel values, and/or Church teachings will help to build a Church for our daughters?

What gives you hope that we can, indeed, build a Church for our daughters?

In what ways can you help to build a Church for our daughters?



Building a Church for Our Daughters

TEMPLATE FOR INVITING YOUR BISHOP TO DIALOGUE

This template should serve as a guide to help you compose and structure your own letter to your bishop. Experience shows that bishops are more likely to respond to a personal letter than a form letter. Please fill this template with your own voice, concerns, passion, and personal experience.

Dear Bishop _____,

PARAGRAPH ONE:

Briefly introduce yourself. It may make sense given the content of the letter to introduce yourself in terms of your relationship to young Catholics. *(e.g. I/we (if writing as a group) am writing to you today as a mother of two teenage daughters; or I write to you today as a campus minister who works with college students)*

Follow up with your concern/the reason for writing. Again, it makes sense to speak from your own experience. *(e.g. Each week, it is a struggle to get my daughters to Mass; Each day I encounter young women who are struggling with their Catholic identity. It breaks my heart when they tell me things like _____).*

PARAGRAPH TWO:

Now, having spoken from your personal experience, place that experience within the larger context *(e.g. Sadly, I/we know that I am not alone. So many of my friends, colleagues, peers, etc. share the same struggle/tell me similar stories.)*

At this point, it would be appropriate to give some concrete data relevant to your personal experience. See “About Our Theme: Building a Church for Our daughters” for some data.

PARAGRAPH THREE:

Make your appeal. *(e.g. Yet, I still have faith and hope that we can work together to build a Church for these young women/reverse these trends, etc.)*

Name a proposed solution (see Declaration for our Daughters for ideas) or two based both on what you're passionate about and on your personal experience/reason for writing. *(e.g. I/we believe that if my daughters and their peers had the opportunity to hear women preach on the readings, they would feel _____; or I believe that if these young women knew the Church was fighting for justice for women and girls across the globe they would _____)*

PARAGRAPH FOUR:

Invite your bishop to dialogue further with you. *(e.g. I/we would welcome the opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities that I have presented at your earliest convenience. I know that if we come together to discern the needs, hopes and dreams of these young women as well as the Spirit, we can _____.)*

Be sure to include your contact information so the bishop can get back to you.

In faith, hope, and love,

Your name and contact information

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WOMEN IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Mary of Magdala

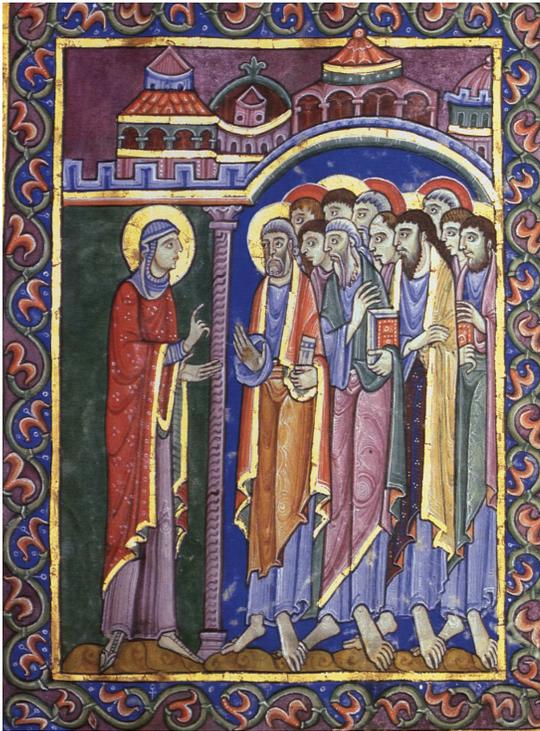


Image of page 51 of the *St. Albans Psalter*, depicting Mary of Magdala announcing the Resurrection to the Apostles. Produced in England, St. Albans Abbey, ca. 1119–23.

Mary of Magdala: Witness, Leader, Friend & Apostle to the Apostles

by Sister Christine Schenk, CSJ

Not a prostitute

Mary of Magdala is perhaps the most maligned and misunderstood figure in early Christianity.

In Christian art and hagiography, Mary has been romanticized, allegorized, and mythologized beyond recognition. Since the fourth century, she has been portrayed as a prostitute and public sinner who, after encountering Jesus, repented and spent the rest of her life in private prayer and penitence. Paintings, some little more than pious pornography, reinforce the mistaken belief that sexuality, especially female sexuality, is shameful, sinful, and worthy of repentance. Yet the actual biblical account of Mary of Magdala paints a far different portrait than that of the bare-breasted reformed harlot of Renaissance art.

First witness to the Resurrection

Nowhere in scripture is Mary of Magdala identified as a public sinner or a prostitute. Instead, scripture shows her as the primary witness to the most central events of Christian faith, named in exactly the same way (*Maria e Magdalena*) in each of four gospels written for diverse communities throughout the Mediterranean world. It was impossible to relate the story of the Resurrection without including “Mary, the one from Magdala.”

Luke 8,1-3 tells us that Mary traveled with Jesus in the Galilean discipleship and, with Joanna and Susanna, supported his mission from her own financial resources. In the synoptic gospels, Mary leads the group of women who witness Jesus’ death, burial, the empty tomb, and his Resurrection. The synoptics contrast Jesus’ abandonment by the male disciples with the faithful strength of the women disciples who, led by Mary, accompany him to his death. John’s gospel names Mary of Magdala as the first to discover the empty tomb and shows the Risen Christ sending her to announce the Good News of his Resurrection to the other disciples. This prompted early church Fathers to name her “the Apostle to the Apostles.”



St. Mary of Magdala Proclaiming the Resurrection. Margaret Beaudette, SC. 2014. Used with Permission.

That the message of the Resurrection was first entrusted to women is regarded by scripture scholars as strong proof for the historicity of the Resurrection accounts. Had accounts of Jesus' Resurrection been fabricated, women would never have been chosen as witnesses, since Jewish law did not acknowledge the testimony of women.

Early non-canonical Christian writings show faith communities growing up around Mary's ministry, where she is portrayed as understanding Jesus' message better than did Peter and the male disciples. Scholars tell us that these writings are not about the historical persons Mary and Peter but instead reflect tensions over women's roles in the early church. Prominent leaders such as Mary and Peter were evoked to justify opposing points of view. What is not disputed is the recognition of Mary of Magdala as an important woman leader in earliest Christianity.

What Happened?

Why are contemporary Christians uninformed about Mary's faithful discipleship and prominent leadership role in the infant church? One

explanation is a common misreading of Luke's gospel which tells us that "seven demons had gone out of her." (Luke 8,1-3) To first century ears, this meant only that Mary had been cured of serious illness, not that she was sinful. According to biblical scholars such as Sr. Mary Thompson, illness was commonly attributed to the work of evil spirits, although not necessarily associated with sinfulness. The number seven symbolized that her illness was either chronic or very severe.

Women Leaders Suppressed

In 312, when Constantine made Christianity the religion of the empire, the Christian community was caught in a cultural conflict as it moved from worship in house churches where women's leadership was accepted, to worship in public places where women's leadership violated Roman social codes of honor and shame. In the fourth century, male church leaders at the Council of Laodicea suppressed women leaders because of the belief that women were created subordinate to men. During this same time period, we see the memory of Mary of Magdala changing from that of a strong female disciple

and proclaimer of the Resurrection to a repentant prostitute and public sinner. Scholars such as Dr. Jane Schaberg believe this was done deliberately to discourage female leadership in the church. As knowledge of Jesus' many women disciples faded from historical memory, their stories merged and blurred. The tender anointing of Mary of Bethany prior to Jesus' passion was linked to the woman "known to be a sinner" whose tears washed and anointed Jesus' feet at Simon's house. The anointing texts combined all of these women into one generic public sinner, "Magdalen." Misidentification of Mary as reformed public sinner achieved official standing with a powerful homily by Pope Gregory the Great (540-604).

Henceforth, Mary of Magdala became known in the west, not as the strong woman leader who accompanied Jesus through a tortuous death, first witnessed his Resurrection, and proclaimed the Risen Savior to the early church, but as a wanton woman in need of repentance and a life of hidden (and hopefully silent) penitence. Interestingly, the eastern church never identified her as a prostitute, but honored her throughout history as "the Apostle to the Apostles."

Prominent Female Leader, Not Jesus' Wife

The 2002 publication of *The Da Vinci Code* ignited widespread controversy about the true role of Mary of Magdala. Unfortunately, Dan Brown's book, while an engaging fictional narrative, has done a disservice to the historical Mary of Magdala and other early women church leaders. Though *The Da Vinci Code* conveys a beautiful ideal of the essential unity of male and female, it is ultimately subversive to women's full and equal leadership in the church because it focuses on the fiction of Mary's marital status rather than the fact of her leadership in proclaiming Jesus' Resurrection.

There is no historical or biblical data to support speculation that Mary of Magdala was married to Jesus. The contention that ancient writers didn't mention their marriage and offspring for fear of

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In 1997, FutureChurch began a special celebration of the July 22nd feast of Mary of Magdala. The event was designed to promote contemporary scholarship about Jesus' inclusive practice and to provide a place for women to serve in visible liturgical roles. The popularity of the celebrations grew rapidly from 23 in 1997 to several hundred each succeeding year. They are held in Catholic parishes, Protestant churches, retreat houses, schools, convent chapels, private homes, and include special celebrations during Lent and Holy Week.

For copies of a liturgical celebration, visit the FutureChurch website:
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Jewish persecution doesn't hold up because John's gospel and most of the apocryphal literature were written after the fall of Jerusalem, when there would have been nothing to fear from Jewish authorities. If Mary of Magdala were Jesus' wife and the mother of his child, it is highly unlikely that these texts would have omitted these important facts, especially since she is prominently portrayed in both as the primary witness to the Resurrection and a female leader who, in many ways, understood Jesus' mission better than did the male disciples.

If Jesus were married, it wasn't to Mary of Magdala, because then she would have been known as "Mary the wife of Jesus," not Mary of Magdala. Literary and social conventions

in antiquity dictated that if women were mentioned (a very rare occurrence) they were nearly always named by their relationship to the patriarchal household, for example: "Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chusa" (Luke 8,1-3). Atypically, Mary of Magdala was named according to the town she was from, not by her relationship to a man. Biblical scholars believe this indicates that she was probably a wealthy independent woman not bound to the patriarchal household.

Contemporary scholarship has rightfully restored our understanding of Mary of Magdala as an important early Christian leader. Now she becomes the same inspiring role model for twenty-first century disciples that she was for first century Christians.

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Women in Paul's Ministry

by Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ

FutureChurch



Icon of Phoebe, the deacon, named by Paul in Romans 16.

Introduction

In spite of the difficult passages about women in Paul's writings that can become real obstacles to a genuine appreciation of Paul, there is abundant evidence of the activity of women in various kinds of ministry in the Pauline churches. They collaborated with him and were his co-workers. Their leadership roles included hosting house churches, evangelizing, teaching, travel, and offering hospitality to visiting church members.

Women Leaders at Philippi

Euodia and Syntyche

The first that we encounter are two women with Greek names, Euodia ("good fragrance") and Syntyche ("good luck") in Phil. 4:2-3. They are not getting along with each other—or possibly, they are together in a disagreement with Paul. Paul has written three previous chapters on the theme of unity, urging the recipients of the letter to take the examples of Christ and of himself by being willing to surrender certain rights and privileges in order to be one in Christ. Now he solemnly entreats these two women to be united in their thinking, and he urges a third party, not called by name, to mediate their disagreement. By way of explanation, Paul says that Euodia and Syntyche have struggled and contended alongside Paul and someone else named Clement in the work of advancing the gospel. This means that they were engaged in the work of evangelization.

Episkopoi and Diakonoi

The opening lines of Paul's letter to the Philippians contain a reference found nowhere else in the greetings of his letters: he and Timothy greet not only the holy ones or saints in Philippi, but add a greeting to their episkopoi and diakonoi. Certainly the Greek word episkopos, which ordinarily means overseer or manager, does not yet refer to what will later be a "bishop," though that is the word that eventually came to be used for this office. Proof that that is not yet its meaning is the fact that there are more than one in the same city; the word is in the plural. Rather, this is more likely a reference to the leaders of house churches, groupings of believers that met in private houses for worship and other means of nurturing their faith life. Since

Philippi was a Roman military colony, it seemsto have been the first of the Christian groups to begin using such a term for its leaders.

The other group addressed in Phil. 1:1 are the diakonoi. This word, adapted later to mean "deacon," was a general word for ministers, attendants, and agents or official representatives. Here it refers to a designated group of persons who provide some kind of assistance in the community. But where do Euodia and Syntyche fit into this schema and why does Paul single them out? If we follow the flow of Paul's argument about unity, we can see that his appeal to them comes at the very end and is the climax. It is not a miscellaneous comment. The disagreement between Euodia and Syntyche (more likely than their common disagreement with Paul) is a major problem, and perhaps the major problem that Paul is facing in the Philippian church. If this is so, then these two women are not insignificant members of the church. They are likely to be among the episkopoi, that is, the hosts of groups of believers who meet in their houses, and members of a local council of leaders. Thus they are major figures in the Philippian church, persons who lead and are responsible for the life of faith there.

Lydia

There is another woman character who appears in stories about Philippi, this time in Acts: Lydia. The narrative in Acts 16 describes Paul and Timothy going to the river just outside the city walls on the Sabbath, looking for a Jewish place of prayer. Instead of finding a mixed group, however, they encounter a group of women. One was a cloth merchant named Lydia who had her own household. "The Lord opened her heart" to believe. She and her household were baptized and she then provided hospitality to Paul and Timothy (Acts 16:13-15). Later, after a difficult experience in the city when they were about to leave, they went back first to the house of Lydia, where they encouraged the group that had formed there (Acts 16:40). This group was the nucleus of the Christian community in Philippi meeting in the house of Lydia, who was therefore the provider of hospitality and the natural presider at their common meals.

Women Prophets in Corinth

There were nameless women, too. Some of them are mentioned in 1 Cor. 11:2-15. They are the Corinthian women prophets whose social freedom was disturbing to Paul. They claimed charismatic authority to ignore traditional behavior with regard to head covering, still an issue today in some cultures. If we only focus on the head covering problem, however, we miss the importance of what they were really doing. This reference to women who pray and prophesy fits the pattern we see elsewhere in early Christian prophecy: that women were always found among the prophets. It is the Holy Spirit who decides who has the gift. Prophecy was a gift and a ministry in the first generations of the church. The memory of these women prophets means that both men and women engaged in this service to the community and that all other references to prophets, for example, 1 Corinthians 14, refer to both women and men.

Women Leaders in the Letter to the Romans

Phoebe

The most important place in the Pauline writings, however, to find information about women's ministry is Romans 16. Here are eight named and two unnamed women who are remembered by Paul as part of his ministry. The first and most important is Phoebe (Rom. 16:1-2). These verses are a recommendation of her to the recipients of the letter. Paul calls her by two titles: diakonos of the church of Cenchrae (one of the seaports of Corinth) and prostatis of many, including Paul.

The title diakonos we have already seen in the opening lines of Paul's letter to the Philippians. It can be translated "minister" or "deacon," but the translation "deaconess" is not correct, since this refers to an order of diakonal women that arose in the third century. Paul uses the masculine term; the feminine had not yet evolved. The word connotes a minister, attendant, or envoy. In this case, it is the envoy function that seems dominant, because it is evident from the language that Paul uses that she is carrying his letter to Rome. She is unknown to the communities there, and Paul introduces her.

Another site in the Pauline letters that probably refers to women deacons is 1 Tim. 3:11. The majority of scholars hold that this letter is written by someone else after the time of Paul but in continuity with the Pauline legacy. Here, in the context of qualifications for diakonoi, "the women" are to be dignified, sober, and trustworthy. While it is possible that wives of male deacons are intended, the better interpretation is that women also filled this role in the church of Timothy.

The second title Paul uses for Phoebe in Romans 16 is prostatis. This reference has been much studied in recent years as we seek to understand better these women in Paul's life. It is the feminine form of the masculine prostatés. In both genders the word generally means patron or sponsor of some kind. In this patronage culture, calling someone a patron implies higher social status and power. There is an interesting parallel from Corinth at about the same time that Paul is writing his letter to the Romans from there. Another woman, Junia Theodora, was commemorated in several inscriptions by her fellow country people from Lycia (western Turkey) for her prostasia, which consisted of hospitality, patronage, and networking in Corinth for traveling Lycians. It is likely that Phoebe did the same for traveling Christians like Paul. This no doubt involved hosting a house church like Lydia, Euodia, and Syntyche in Philippi.

Prisca

The second woman named in Romans 16 is Prisca, sometimes also called Priscilla. According to Acts 18:2-3, with her husband Aquila she had come from Italy to Corinth. In 1 Cor 16:19, they are hosting a house church in Asia (western Turkey, probably at Ephesus). Now, this couple with Latin names are back in Rome, again hosting a house church. They too, like Paul, were leather workers and traveled a great deal. Here we see a husband and wife who work side by side in their trade and also together in the ministry of evangelization and ongoing instruction. Later in the same chapter, the two of them together take Apollos aside and instruct him more properly in the faith (Acts 18:26). Their names also occur in 2 Tim. 4:19.

Junia

Another missionary couple appears in Rom. 16:7. Andronicus and Junia, Paul's relatives or fellow country people, early converts and imprisoned at some time with Paul, are prominent among the apostles. Here again, much ink has been spilled over this reference, because it seems that both of them are called apostles. The wording suggests not that the apostles know them well, but that among the apostles, they are well known. This Junia has quite a textual history. Because the Latin name is in the accusative case in Greek, it would look the same whether a woman's or a man's name. However, there is no other known example of the male name, which would be Junias, while the female name Junia is common (some texts say Julia, which is just as common a Latin name). In early centuries, Junia was thought to be a woman. In fact, the late fourth-century preacher John Chrysostom remarks on what a wonderful woman she must have been that Paul called her an apostle. Later in the Middle Ages, it was decided that if this person was an apostle it must be a man, and Junia became Junias. Only within the last half of the twentieth century has the interpretation been reassessed and Junia once again recognized as a woman apostle. Her apostleship with her husband probably consisted in itinerant evangelization.

Other Women Leaders

Maria, Tryphaena, Tryphosa & Persis

Other women are mentioned by Paul in Romans 16, as he sends greetings to all those he knows at Rome. Maria in v. 6 has worked very hard; Paul uses the word he usually does for ministry. In v. 12, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and “dear Persis” are remembered, all of whom have labored in ministry. Finally, Julia is named among others in v. 15. There remain two unnamed women, the mother of Rufus in v. 13 and the sister of Nereus in v. 15. Of Rufus’ mother, Paul says that she is a mother to him as well, which undoubtedly testifies to her gifts of hospitality.

Apphia

The letter to Philemon is really addressed to three people: Philemon “beloved brother and co-worker,” Apphia “our sister,” and Archippos “fellow soldier,” as well as to the church in their house. Soon, however, the text becomes Paul’s message to Philemon over the situation with Onesimus. Is Apphia Philemon’s wife or sister, or does she have a similar relationship with Archippos, or are they all related somehow? Whatever is the relationship among the three, we know that Apphia is one of the three prominent leaders of this house church.

Nympha

There is one more name that should be mentioned here: Nympha in Col. 4:15. Though most scholars doubt that Colossians was written by Paul, still it stands within the Pauline circle of writings. Here the letter to the Colossians is to be sent also to Laodicea, a few miles away, where Nympha is named as host of a house church. Like Lydia and others at Philippi and elsewhere, she engaged in ministry that included hospitality, spiritual leadership, and other kinds of attention to the needs of the members.

Conclusion

The record of these women reveals the intimate involvement of women in the first years of the formation of the church. They were workers alongside their male counterparts and sharers in the ministry of communicating the gospel in whatever ways possible.

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WOMEN IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP



Jesus and Women



Martha & Mary. He Qi. Used with Permission.

by **Christine Schenk, CSJ**

Background

Scholars seeking to discover women's roles in late antiquity face formidable challenges. All history until the mid-20th century was written by men with preconceived notions about women. Philosophic treatises viewed females as created subordinate to males. Since women's primary roles were believed to belong to the household and to reproduction, they were often forbidden active roles in economic, cultural and religious life. In evaluating historical data, feminist biblical scholars and church historians now recognize the importance of differentiating between "gender ideology" and "the reality of women's lives." [Ute Eisen, p.3]

In seeking "the reality of women's lives," care must be taken to avoid portraying Jesus as liberating women from a Judaism that restricted and subordinated them any more than was the lot of all women in late antiquity. Patriarchy restricted both Jewish and Gentile women, but the extent of that restriction depended more on a woman's socioeconomic status, cultural context and geography than her religious affiliation. Jesus was an observant Jew. His movement arose from faith that just as God brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt, so God would act to remove Roman oppression and bring about a new time of justice and right relationship among nations and among people. Jesus' inclusive practice should be viewed as emerging from his Judaism, not apart from it.

This brochure seeks to make available in an "at-a-glance" format materials that fill many books written by renowned scholars. You are encouraged to peruse these for a more comprehensive treatment of this fascinating topic.

Women in the Gentile World

All cultures of Jesus' time were patriarchal. Women were subordinated first to their fathers, then to their husbands. However, their socioeconomic status could vary markedly according to the degree of civil and inheritance rights each of their Mediterranean cultures permitted them.

Greece and Macedonia In 340 BCE, Demosthenes wrote: "Keep mistresses for the sake of pleasure, concubines for daily care of our person, wives to bear legitimate children and be faithful guardians of households." Only Greek wives were citizens with the right to vote. They had a limited right to own property apart from their dowry. Concubines and mistresses had no civil rights, though mistresses

were educated to be the pleasurable soul-companions of their lovers. As in Rome, unwanted daughters and sons could be left on the hillside to die. Macedonian women fared better. They built temples, founded cities, engaged armies, and held fortresses. They were regents and co-rulers. Men admired their wives and named cities after them. Thessalonika was such a city, and here women were given inheritable civic rights. A Macedonian businesswoman, Lydia, founded the church at Phillipi after her conversion by Paul.

Egypt and Rome Egyptian women were juridically equal to men. They were buyers, sellers, borrowers, and lenders. They paid taxes, could initiate a divorce, and petition the government for support. The eldest daughter was permitted to be a legitimate heir. In Rome, the authority of the father was paramount. A Roman girl was "sold" in name into the hands of her future husband. Both daughters and sons were educated, boys until the age of seventeen, girls until thirteen when their marriage was normally arranged by their parents. A Roman woman could not conduct business in her own name, but she could enlist the help of a male relative or friend to serve as her agent. Women had inheritance rights and the right to divorce though they were not permitted to vote or hold public office. Nevertheless, wealthy Roman matrons had considerable power and influence because they were the de facto heads of households and business managers while their spouses were off fighting Caesar's wars or otherwise engaged in matters of state.

Christianity did not flourish among Palestinian Jews. Instead, it expanded rapidly in the Hellenist cultures surrounding the Mediterranean. This was due in no small part to the influence of wealthy Gentile women. Women's roles in Hellenist cultures influenced women's roles in the early church. Generally speaking, women had greater socioeconomic status in cultures with strong female deities (Aphrodite in Corinth, Artemis in Ephesus and Isis in Egypt). In virtually all Gentile cultures both women and men exercised leadership in religious worship.

Women in Palestinian Judaism

Discovering the "realities of women's lives" in Palestine is fraught with complexity largely because until recently, much of the historical data about first century Judaism derived from later Rabbinic sources from the 2-4 century. However, the discovery of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts and the Dead Sea Scrolls expanded our understanding of both early Christianity and first century Palestinian Judaism. The following summary portrait is derived from multiple sources.

Palestinian Hebrew women were among the poorest in the world in Jesus' day. This was due in no small part to Roman agricultural practices that divested the Israelites (particularly Galileans) of their ancestral lands and increasingly impoverished the population. Hebrew women were not allowed to divorce their husbands, but could be divorced for anything from burning the dinner (Hillel) to adultery (Shammai). In a culture in which women did not survive unless they were linked to the patriarchal household, it was disastrous to be divorced. Seen in this light, Jesus' proscription of divorce is markedly protective of women. The raising of the son of the widow of Nain is another example of Jesus' compassion for the poverty of a woman whose survival was threatened by the loss of her link to the patriarchal household. Most Hebrew women had minimal property rights. Theoretically women could inherit land, but in practice male heirs had precedence. Even if a woman did inherit property, her husband had the right to its use and its fruits.

A child was held to be Jewish only if the mother was Jewish. Most Jewish girls were betrothed by their fathers at a young age. Jewish women were ritually unclean while menstruating, a reality detailed at length in Leviticus. If she inadvertently touched a man while having her menses, he was obliged to undergo a purification ritual before worshipping at the temple. In Mark's gospel, the woman afflicted with a twelve-year hemorrhage could have been a social outcast, depending upon how strictly her co-religionists interpreted the purity laws. We see Jesus' lack of concern about ritual impurity in his healing of her after she courageously touched him despite the taboo.

(Mk:25)

Women and men were segregated for worship in the Jerusalem Temple, which was destroyed by Rome in 70 AD. While women attended synagogue, we have no evidence that first century Palestinian Jewish women led worship. Whether a woman should be educated in the Torah was hotly debated. As a rule, only the Rabbis' wives were so educated. Women were not normally accepted as witnesses in Jewish law. A woman's primary sphere was in the home where they led table prayers and festival candle lighting ceremonies.

There are exceptions to the restrictions experienced by women in antiquity. Ross S. Kraemer's study of epigraphic, papyrological and archaeological sources found that in the second century, both women and men in the Jewish Diaspora (Jews who had their homes outside of Israel) held synagogue office. Women were not segregated in Diaspora synagogues and some had economic and religious independence.

Women in the Gospels

Jesus' behavior toward women, even viewed through the androcentric lens of the Gospel texts, is remarkable. Jesus welcomed women into his closest discipleship: "After this he journeyed through towns and villages preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve accompanied him, and also some women... Mary called the Magdalene... Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who were assisting them out of their means." (Lk 8:1-5). Women were not named in ancient texts unless they had social prominence. Scholars believe the implication in this text is that wealthy women underwrote the Galilean mission. Jesus welcomed female disciples into his entourage to learn the ways of God, along with the male disciples. This was unusual since Jewish men did not normally speak in public to women outside their kinship circle, much less travel around the countryside with them.

The story of Martha and Mary is illustrative. Luke shows us Mary at Jesus' feet. One interpretation is that Mary has taken the place traditionally

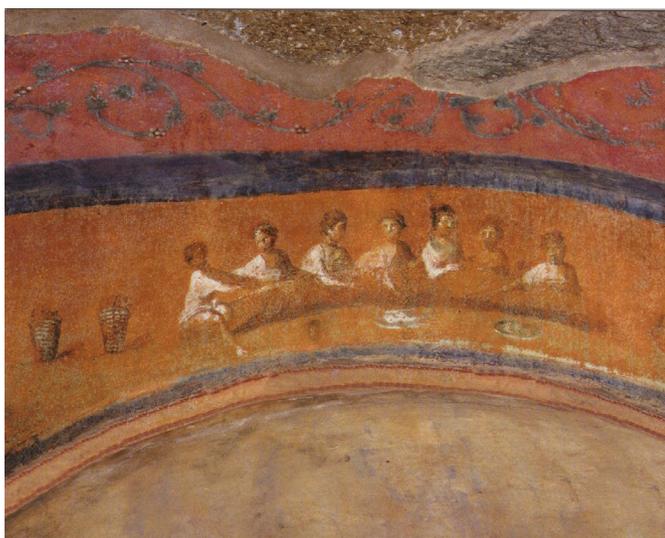
reserved for male rabbinical students. Martha, as often happens even today among women when the rules of patriarchy are challenged, protests. But Jesus praises Mary's thirst to learn more about God: "It is Mary who has chosen the better part; it is not to be taken from her." (Luke 10:38-42). Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus challenge deep seated patriarchal assumptions: that only women bear the burden of sexual sin; that Samaritan and Canaanite women are to be shunned and discounted; and that prodigal sons are to be disowned. Instead, men are challenged to own their complicity in adultery; the Samaritan woman becomes a missionary bringing her whole town to belief in Jesus; the Canaanite woman's fierce love for her daughter succeeds in broadening Jesus' own understanding of to whom the Good News is sent; and the wayward son is welcomed home with a huge party thrown by a prodigal father.

Women's equal call to discipleship with their brothers is most evident in the Resurrection accounts, for it is upon the testimony of women that the proclamation of the Resurrection depends. All four Gospels show Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the Mother of James and Joseph, Salome and the other women disciples accompanying Jesus to his death; anointing and burying his body; viewing the empty tomb; and experiencing his risen presence. That the message of the Resurrection was first given to women is regarded by biblical scholars as compelling evidence for the historicity of the Resurrection accounts. Had these texts been fabricated by overzealous male disciples, they would not have included the witness of women in a society that rejected their legal witness.

Women in the Earliest Churches

The early female disciples of Jesus assumed leadership in the earliest Christian Churches alongside their brothers. This is reflected in Paul's letters, the Acts of the Apostles, and other early Christian writings. In the last chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, ten of the 29 church leaders whose favor he seeks, are women. Phoebe, Paul's patroness at Cenchreae, and Prisca, (who, with her husband Aquila, was a prominent missionary)

head the list. Paul's letters (excepting Timothy and Titus which were not written by him) are the earliest Christian manuscripts we have, and constitute strong historical evidence for gender balanced leadership in the infant church. This equality is reflected in the Galatian baptismal hymn: "There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28).



Fractio Panis. Fresco. Early 2nd Century.
Catacombs of Priscilla.

The Book of Acts refers to "Phillip's prophetic daughters" (Acts 21:9-10). The early church historian Eusebius, attributes the apostolic origins of the provincial Asian churches to their ministry, thereby acknowledging that at least some women

were transmitters of apostolic tradition. What a pity that their names are lost to us! The Didache, an early worship manual, names prophets as the normal leaders of Eucharistic celebrations, which were often held in the homes of prominent women. The catacombs of Priscilla in Rome contain a second century fresco portraying such a Eucharist.

By the end of the first century the leadership of women was already meeting resistance: "A woman must learn in silence and be completely submissive. I do not permit a woman to act as teacher, or in any way to have authority over a man; she must be quiet.." (1:Tim). Nevertheless, archaeological, literary and epigraphical evidence confirm that female leaders flourished alongside male leaders well into the fourth century. By this time, Constantine had succeeded in using Christianity to unify the crumbling Roman empire. As Christianity became more mainstream, worship moved from the private space of house churches to public spaces. The leadership of women in public spheres violated honor-shame cultural customs of the Greco-Roman world. The inclusive, charismatic discipleship of equals which enhanced Christianity's rapid early growth slowly disappeared, only to re-emerge in the rise of religious communities which continued the prophetic tradition in Catholicism for over 2000 years. It is in this tradition that church reform organizations walk today.

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Building a Church for Our Daughters

This selection of “she-ros” is culled from four continents and two millennia. They are only a few voices from the great chorus of Catholic women who have changed their world and ours with their selfless grace, vast learning, inclusive fellowship and abiding faith. Share their stories with the women and men in your life who are participating in God’s world-changing work.

CATHOLIC WOMEN WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

Perpetua (AD ca 183-203)

A noblewoman by birth, Perpetua was a young wife and a new mother when she was arrested for being a Christian. In prison, she spoke up for fair treatment for her fellow prisoners, comforted those around her, and had visions of her impending death in the arena at Carthage in Africa. Well educated, she wrote about her imprisonment before she was martyred along with three of the family’s slaves, who were fellow catechumens. They included her servant Felicity, who was pregnant when arrested and gave birth in prison. (*Medieval Women’s Visionary Literature*, Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, Oxford University Press, 1986)

Macrina (AD 327-379)

The eldest of nine children in a devout Christian family, she was the sister of St. Gregory and is credited for converting her younger brother, St. Basil, to the faith. Choosing not to marry, she turned the family estate into a woman’s monastic community in which family members and servants held property in common. She was well-educated in Christian writings and Scripture. Her bishop brother held her in the highest esteem for her deep faith, her talents in philosophical argument and her great organizational skill. (*Medieval Women’s Visionary Literature*)

Theodora Episcopa

She appears on a mosaic with three woman saints on an arch in a Roman basilica dedicated to Sts. Prudentiana and Praxedis. The inscription identifies her as Theodora Episcopa, episcopa being the feminine of the Latin word for bishop. She held her office at a time when popular acceptance of strong woman leaders in the early church was at odds with traditional Greco-Roman thinking about women’s natural roles.

(*When Women were Priests*, Karen Jo Torjesen. (HarperCollins, 1993)

Lucilla

A Spanish noble woman in fourth-century Carthage, she used her substantial economic and political power to challenge bishops who opposed devotion to the popular spirituality of martyrdom, which she favored. She provided patronage for exiled African church leaders, whose Christian communities were persecuted by the Emperor Diocletian. Through her influence, she helped found a new branch of the African church. (*When Women were Priests*)

Leta Presbyterera

A fifth century woman priest in Brettium, Leta’s tomb inscription provides evidence that early church leadership included married, woman priests. Presbyterera is the feminine ending for presbyter (priest). The inscription on Leta’s tomb in a catacomb in Tropea reads “Sacred to her good memory. Leta the priest lived 40 years, 8 months and 9 days, for whom her husband set up this tomb...” (*from Notes on the Female Priesthood in Antiquity*, by Giorgio Otranto, as translated in “Priesthood, Precedent and Prejudice,” Mary Ann Rossi. *Journal of Feminists Studies in Religion*.)

Hild of Whitby (AD 614-680)

An abbess of a double monastery at Whitby, five of her pupils became bishops. She is credited for encouraging the poet Caedmon in 664 to write the first Christian religious poetry in Old English. Hild was a friend of the historian Bede who wrote “So great was her prudence that not only ordinary folk, but kings and princes used to come and ask her advice in their difficulties, and take it.” (*Medieval Women’s Visionary Literature*)

Leoba (AD 700-780)

As a child she studied the sacred sciences under Mother Tetta, who in secular life had been queen of Northumbria. Leoba was among the women that St. Boniface invited to help Christianize Germany. At a time when monastic life provided women with opportunities for learning, leadership and a certain amount of safety, Leoba flourished as a scholar, counselor to the powerful, and a spiritual leader. Her biographers attribute to her an almost miraculous power, relating how her prayers calmed a storm that was terrifying nearby villagers. (*Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*)

Dhuoda (803-843)

An educated lay woman, mother and wife, Dhuoda left a record as a lay writer at a time when literature was dominated by clerical writing. She lived most of her life alone, semi-abandoned by her husband, Bernhard of Septimania. She was the mother of two sons, both of whom were taken from her--one before he was baptized. Dhuoda wrote a moral handbook, full of motherly advice, for her eldest son, William, whom her husband sent as a sort of political hostage to serve Charles the Bald. (*In Her Words: Women's Writings in the History of Christian Thought*, ed. Amy Oden, Abingdon Press, 1994)

Hrostvit of Gandersheim (932-1000)

From childhood this daughter of a noble Saxon family was educated in an abbey of religious women, which had its own court, kept its own army, coined its own money and whose abbess had a seat on the imperial diet. Hrostvit is considered the earliest known German poet and the first dramatist since classical times. Among her writings were eight sacred legends, six sacred dramas, and two epics. Recent scholars have recognized her for her intellectual endeavors, her familiarity with Scripture and for her writing style. (*In Her Words and Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*)

Julian of Norwich (1342-1416?)

A mystic and visionary of late medieval England, she led a solitary life devoted to contemplative prayer. She is the first known woman of letters in the English language, having composed a book of profound spiritual and theological richness based upon her religious experience. Her insights into the nature of God's unconditional love for us, her theology of the trinity, her advice about avoiding scrupulosity regarding sin, her hope in the certainty of salvation, and her imaging of Jesus and God as Mother, are particularly original contributions to Christian theology, as relevant today as they were for her own age. She emerges as a paradigm for women scholars, and, perhaps even more importantly, for anyone who needs a practical, sensible approach to the spiritual life. (*Wisdom's Daughter*, Dr. Joan Nuth, Crossroads, 1991)

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

Born into a noble family in Hess, she was raised from the age of 8 in a female community attached to the Dominican order. As an adult, she founded two convents near Bingen. Hildegard had mystical experiences and visions. She was a

poet, healer and counselor to many prominent people of the day. Unprecedented for women of the time, she undertook four preaching missions to clergy and laity. (*Women Mystics in Medieval Europe*, Emilie Zum Brunn, Georgette Epiney-Burgard and Sheila Hughes, Paragon House, 1989)

The Beguines (1200-1800)

In the 13th century a feminine spirituality developed that eschewed a cloistered life and instead focused on evangelical poverty, self sufficiency by work, intellectual pursuits and a communal, although not necessarily vowed, life. The Beguine movement, a precursor to today's religious communities, began in northern Europe with individual women, who lived religious but uncloistered lives. Eventually many Beguines gathered in communities that evolved into full-fledged parishes, self-sufficient towns of women who were free to pray, study and teach, and do charitable works. Many were mystics who were investigated and suppressed by church officials. (*Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*)

Clare of Assisi (1193 - 1253)

In addition to being St. Francis' friend and confidant, Clare was a dynamic and innovative religious leader in her own right. She founded the order of the Poor Clares based on Francis' rule. This non-hierarchical community of women was committed to absolute poverty and service of the poor. Clare believed that her community did not need to be supported by others, nor did she want it to live off the income generated from owning property. While Francis waited eight years for Rome to approve his rule, Clare waited nearly 40. (*Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism*, Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, Oxford University Press, 1994)

Catherine of Siena (1347-1380)

A visionary from childhood, she dedicated her life to religious service after experiencing a mystical marriage to Christ. Catherine set about public preaching in response to a divine command to go into the world and save souls. Hugely influential in the church and society of her day, she was outspoken regarding the Crusades, civil war, and the Avignon papacy. She convinced Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome, and worked to end divisions in the church until her death at the age of 33. She was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1970. (*In Her Words*)

Joan of Arc (1412-1431)

Rather than bow to her society's expectations of women, she paid strict attention to the persistent, divine voices within her. They impelled her to convince French authorities of her divine mission to help the French defeat the invading English. Clad in armor Joan led a few successful battles, and was present for the crowning of French King Charles VII. Ultimately she was captured, turned over to the English, proclaimed a heretic by the local Catholic bishop and was burned at the stake. The church later reversed its court decision and canonized her. (*Butler's Lives of Saints*, Michael Walsh, ed. Harper and Row, 1987)

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

At the age of 16 Teresa left her aristocratic Spanish family for religious life. After years of spiritual and physical struggle, she had a “second conversion” in 1555 which drew her closer to God, deeper into prayer and further into the life of the poor. She founded a small convent dedicated to a more austere Carmelite life, which required the nuns to live off of alms and their own labor. Her reforms had a wide-spread impact on the structure and spirituality of religious communities. Teresa’s spirituality greatly influenced St. John of the Cross. By the time she died she had written 11 books, 23 poems and more than 15,000 letters. Teresa was declared a “Doctor of the Church” in 1970, along with Catherine of Siena. (*In Her Words*)

Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz (1651-1695)

Born in a small Mexican town, Juana had a keen intellect and chose a life of scholarship over marriage. She entered the order of St. Jerome and lived a comfortable convent life where she studied science, music and literature. Her fine poetry earned her the reputation of being the “Tenth Muse” of New Spain. When clerical authorities accused her of being too secular in her writing, Sor Juana argued that because God made her a rational creature, it was her duty to study and to serve humanity with her gifts of great learning. (*In Her Words*)

Pauline Jericot (1799-1862)

A French woman with incredible organizational skills, she developed the structure of fund raising which ultimately became the Society of the Propagation of the Faith. She organized the popular Living Rosary and initiated the Association of the Holy Childhood, organizing children to raise money for the missions. Jericot spent the last several years of her life begging alms to repay debts incurred when fraudulent financial managers destroyed her dream to build a Christian factory town. She died in poverty. (*Eight Women Who Made A Difference: With Minds of Their Own, Boniface Hanley, OFM. Ave Maria Press, 1991*)

Jeanne Jugan (1792-1878)

Raised in a Breton peasant family, Jugan was a member of the “Trotting Sisters” an outlawed group of uncloistered religious women who moved around constantly in their ministry to the poor. At the age of 47, Jugan and three other women began to take in elderly, homeless women. Tenacious in her ability to beg for money and provisions, she established housing and care for thousands of France’s elderly poor. Her ministry ultimately became The Little Sisters of the Poor, of which she was the first superior. (*Eight Women Who Made A Difference*)

Catherine de Hueck Doherty (1897-1985)

Russian born and highly educated, she fled the Bolshevik revolution with her husband, an army colonel, ending up Canada in 1921. Ten years later, Catherine, a divorced mother of one, chose to live among the poor in the slums of Toronto. A convert to Catholicism, she started the first Friendship House, which provided meals and shelter and support to

the poor of Toronto. In 1947 she and her second husband, Eddy Doherty, established Madonna House in Combermere, Ontario. It developed into a community and retreat center dedicated to spirituality, agriculture, cooperative work and service to the poor. (*Eight Women Who Made A Difference*)

Satoko Kitahara (1929-1958)

A wealthy, well-educated Japanese pharmacist, she converted to Catholic Christianity as a young woman. Defying the strict social propriety expected of wealthy Japanese women of the time, she dedicated the last seven years of her short life to living among the Ant People, a self-sufficient community of Tokyo’s poorest residents. She taught the community’s children, begged for shared provisions and rallied for the community’s rights. She died of tuberculosis at the age of 29. (*Eight Women Who Made A Difference*)

Dorothy Day (1897-1980)

Active in the radical socialist world of Greenwich village in the 1920s, she converted to Catholicism as a young woman. She channeled her economic and political ideology into the Catholic Worker movement, which she developed with Peter Maurin. Day was a single mother who embodied the Catholic Worker movement’s ethic of communal life with the poor, the eschewing of property ownership, intellectual critique of social problems, and a commitment to pacifism. (*Eight Women Who Made A Difference*)

Thea Bowman (1937-1990)

A charismatic African American sister of the Order of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, she inspired and advised bishops, clergy and laity on the power of the African American Catholic legacy. Through her extensive singing, preaching, lecturing and teaching engagements, she encouraged African American Catholics to claim their rich heritage of spirituals and stories, and challenged the American church to embrace its diversity. (“Elders and Ancestors: Sister Thea Bowman, FSPA,” Donald Michael Clark, in *Plenty Good Room*, March-April, 1994, pp 8-12)

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