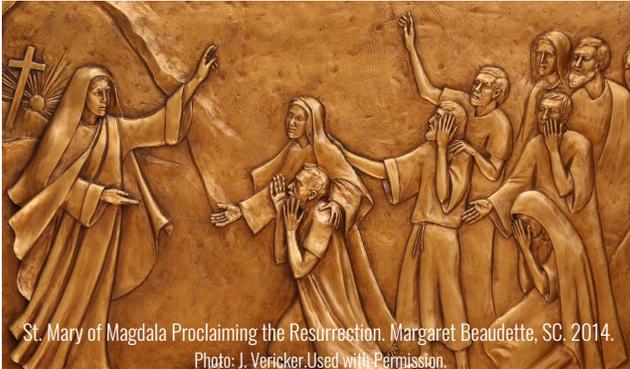


MARY OF MAGDALA

Celebrating Feminism & Faith in Union



Dear Friend of St. Mary of Magdala,

Enclosed is everything you need to celebrate the feast of St. Mary of Magdala this year.

Inspired by the global Women’s Marches and aware that our religious institutions and the world are in dire need of an infusion of feminist energy and truth, our theme for 2018 is **“Celebrating Feminism & Faith in Union.”**

This year, we are inviting you to:

Celebrate the Feast Day of St. Mary of Magdala on or around July 22nd with the theme, “Celebrating Feminism & Faith in Union.” A sample prayer service is included in this pack for your adaptation and use.

Share the gifts that feminism has given to your life of faith with others in your community. The prayer service included in this packet includes an opportunity for participants to share these gifts with each other and ideas for sharing with the larger community.

Take steps to lift up women’s voices and ministry in your community and the larger church. Included in this packet is information a new project “Listening to Women” as well as other excellent ideas for creating and advancing roles for women in your faith community.

Learn more about Feminism and Faith in Union

Feminism and Faith in Union is an initiative of The Women Who Stayed – the women’s ministry of St. Francis Xavier – in partnership with Peace & Justice, Catholic Lesbians, Gay Catholics, and the many other ministries of the Church of St. Francis Xavier in New York City. Sponsoring partners include FutureChurch, Call to Action, and Women’s Ordination Conference. visit www.feminism-faith.org for more information.

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 & Associate Director

Deb Rose-Milavec
Executive Director

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“We need as a church to be ‘informed’ and ‘reformed’ by the prayer, experience, and spiritual leadership of women in the church... The voices of those women who advocate for more visible and audible leadership are critical for the future of our church. To hear and see women in leadership roles is not an ‘indulgence’ but a recognition of the God-given gifts of faith and fidelity that are at the heart of discipleship. Thank you Mary of Magdala!”

– Fr. Bob VerEecke, SJ, Pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church in NYC, in his letter From the Pastor’s Desk, October 29, 2017

Feminism & Faith in Union

For generations, feminists have been working to affirm the full humanity and equality of women - and indeed all people - in every sphere of life. While the work is still incomplete, feminists have made tremendous strides.

In our faith communities, feminist theologians, scripture scholars, historians, ethicists, liturgists, spiritual directors, and activists have:

- recovered ancient and discovered new names and images for God that are more inclusive and expansive and more fully express our relationship with the Divine
- given us healing and liberating ways of thinking about and understanding our God and ourselves
- reclaimed the stories of women from history and scripture - like Mary of Magdala - who inform and inspire us
- provided exciting and fruitful lenses for reading and interpreting scripture
- introduced frameworks for working for justice for all people as we strive to be people of faith at work in the world today

Indeed, many of us who have benefitted from this work can hardly - nor do we want to - imagine our lives of faith without the gifts that feminism has given to us. And it is a cause for celebration that these gifts have been embraced to different degrees in various parts of the Christian community, such as women’s prayer groups and Bible studies, the world of academia, and some small Christian communities and intentional communities. Yet we know that the larger church is still in dire need of an infusion of feminist energy, spirit, and wisdom at every level so that all might come to reap the benefits of feminism and faith in union.

And so, we invite you to join us as we celebrate Feminism and Faith in Union this Feast of Saint Mary of Magdala. ***Join us in celebration of the women who have gone before us, in solidarity with women today whose demands for justice and inclusion call us to conversion, and join us in prayer and hope for our Church that it might come more fully alive with the gifts, spirit, and potential of all its members!***



We know from Galatians 3.28 that *there is no longer male and female; for all of us are one in Christ Jesus*, but you might still be wondering...

Am I a feminist?

Just what is feminism?

How does it relate to our faith?

Merriam-Webster declared “feminism” the Word of the Year for 2017.

Feminism was the most looked-up word in its online dictionary, with 70% more searches than in 2016. Their definitions: “the theory supporting the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes” and “organized activity on behalf of women’s rights and interests.”

Feminism isn’t just for females. People of any gender can be feminists.

“A feminist is anyone who recognizes the equality and full humanity of women and men.” - Gloria Steinem

“This is not a movement for women only but a vision for the church. There are feminist men who espouse feminist spirituality and their numbers are increasing.” - Miriam Therese Winter

Feminism is inclusive and empowering. It is NOT anti-male.

Instead, feminists value the gifts and contributions of all people. In fact, men benefit from feminism too.

Think of how much richer our world and our church would be if everyone’s voice was heard and everyone’s gifts were recognized and embraced.

*There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit...
To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.
(1 Cor 12.4, 7)*

The same is true of many of my gifts and graces, virtues and other spiritual gifts, and those things necessary for the body and human life. I have distributed them all in such a way that no one has all of them. Thus have I given you reason - necessity, in fact - to practice mutual charity. For I could well have supplied each of you with all your needs, both spiritual and material. But I wanted to make you dependent on one another so that each of you would be my minister, dispensing the graces and gifts you have received from me.

(From the Dialogue of Saint Catherine of Siena)



OPTIONS FOR CELEBRATING

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CELEBRATION

GO TO:

www.futurechurch.org/our2018celebration

and we'll post your celebration to our website to help spread the word!

RESOURCES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Regardless of how you celebrate, we encourage you to have the following resources available for your participants to take with you. FutureChurch authorizes you to make copies and distribute these resources, which are included in this packet.

Mary of Magdala

Jesus and Women

Women in the Ministry of St. Paul

About Our Theme & Did You Know

Lifting Up Women's Voices suggestions

Liturgical Celebration Only

- we invite you to use or adapt the enclosed prayer service
- we have included ideas for celebrating an inclusive Mass for those communities celebrating with a Eucharistic liturgy
- Whether celebrating a prayer service or a Eucharistic service, we encourage you to personally invite and include young Catholics, especially women (Some suggestions include: inviting them assist with the planning, leading the music, to read the readings, offer their reflections on the at the time for preaching, or reading the petitions.)

Liturgical Celebration Celebration & Presentation/Discussion

- see suggestions for the celebration above
- If your community is still new to the celebrating the true Mary of Magdala, consider inviting a local scripture scholar or other knowledgeable person to make a presentation on Mary of Magdala before or after the celebration. The included resource on Mary of Magdala may be helpful for creating such a presentation.
- Consider inviting a local woman theologian to present on feminist or womanist theology and the promise it holds for the future of the church.
- In lieu of a formal presentation, you might consider hosting a discussion after your celebration. Some options for such a discussion include: sharing to the readings included in the prayer service; responding to the prompt, "How feminism invigorates/saved/grew my faith"; or brainstorming ideas on infusing your faith community and the larger church with a feminist spirit, energy, and wisdom (see our resource to get the conversation started).



MAKING YOUR CELEBRATION A SUCCESS

Whether this is your first Mary of Magdala Celebration or your community has been celebrating with us for a number of years, these tips may help make your celebration a huge success!

Collaboration & Planning

The most important key to a successful celebration is collaboration. **From planning to celebrating, involve as many people as you can.** Reach out to your friends, peers, and other members of your community to help. Including more people in the planning stages increases the diversity of ideas and insights, wisdom, and possibility! Here are some of the things the group will need to consider:

- When and where to celebrate: local parish church, a private home, another house of worship
- The liturgical ministers: greeters, musicians, presider, preacher, readers, etc.
- The texts and music: which readings/translations, prayers, petitions, etc. to use
- The liturgical space: how to configure and decorate the space to foster hospitality
- Communication: advertisements, announcements, invitations, RSVPs
- Liturgical/Worship aids: booklets, other resources
- Presentation/Discussion details: who will present or what topics will be raised for discussion, how to facilitate hospitality and open, respectful dialogue

Use the planning sheet on the next page to take notes.

Invite, Advertise, Communicate

Once you have made some initial decisions such as location, time, theme, and possible discussions or presentations, you can begin announcing your celebration. Begin by personally inviting people to your celebration. Ask each member of the planning team, any liturgical ministers, or others involved to email, call, or talk to their friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues and personally invite them to your celebration and tell them why it's important.

In addition to these personal invitations, place announcements in your parish bulletin, relevant newsletters, email lists, local

newspapers, etc. You can also hang up posters or postcards on community bulletin boards.

Consider using social media to help reach a broader audience. Ask those involved to share your celebration/event on their own pages and invite larger institutions such as your parish or the school/organization(s) which any presenters or discussion facilitators work for to do the same. You can also use the built-in event planning tools on these platforms.

Tell FutureChurch about your event and we'll help you spread the word. Visit www.futurechurch.org/our2018celebration and **fill out the form** and we'll take it from there!

Regardless of how you advertise we strongly encourage you to have people RSVP. This way you can follow up with a reminder (or two) by phone call or email in the weeks/days leading up to your celebration.

Foster an Environment of Welcome and Inclusion

When people arrive at your celebration, they should find everything welcoming and inclusive.

- Have greeters at doors to welcome and thank people for coming and to distribute any needed materials.
- Provide worship aids or project music, responses, and prayers to foster participation.
- Thank and welcome everyone at the very beginning of your celebration and thank them again at the end.
- Make time for people to greet and welcome each other.
- Be sure that your liturgical ministers reflect the diversity of your anticipated gathering.
- Discern whether your congregation would benefit from bi/multilingual celebrations (to include sign language).
- Consider offering refreshments after your celebration or presentation/discussion.
- Follow up after the celebration. Reach out to those who celebrated with you, thanking them again and inviting them to your next event.

CELEBRATION PLANNING SHEET

The Basics

Date:
Time:
Location:
Theme:

Music

Please customize this box to your celebration with the necessary music choices

Invitation/Communication Plan

Liturgical Ministers

Greeters:
Presider(s):
Readers:
Petition Readers:
Preacher:
Musicians(s):
Other:

Environment

Use this box to describe or diagram your liturgical space, decorations, and any items you might need.

Liturgical Texts

Please customize this box to your celebration with the necessary prayers, readings, petitions, etc.

Worship Aids and Hand Outs

List any materials you will need to facilitate participation here

OPTIONS FOR AN INCLUSIVE MASS

So many parishioners are hungry for a celebration of the Eucharist that truly embodies the beauty and diversity of God's people. Following are some ways you can help your pastor and pastoral ministry / liturgical team create a more inclusive Mass.

- Reach out in hope and faith to your pastor, parish staff, and faith leaders. Ask them to work with you to create a joyful and awareness-raising liturgy in light of the Feast Day of St. Mary of Magdala. This can truly be an opportunity for a “synodal church” moment, as Pope Francis has called us all to. And you may be surprised at the staff’s eagerness to create something together with lay people.
- Use the parish bulletin to invite those who will be celebrating to wear a pink article of clothing in solidarity with women all over the world. White would be another appropriate color, since the liturgical calendar calls for white on the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala.
- Because the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala falls on Sunday this year, your priest may be hesitant to use the readings or the preface for her feast day, since the General Roman Calendar stipulates that the Sunday texts should be used. Work with the leaders in your community to arrive at mutually agreeable solution. You can work the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala into the introductory remarks, the homily, the prayers of the faithful, a reflection after communion, etc.
- Ask if a woman can offer reflections on the day’s readings after Communion or in partnership/dialogue with the priest or deacon during the homily.
- Create prayers of the faithful that name St. Mary of Magdala, honor women, and invite recognition of the equality and full humanity of women and men in our Church and in our world.
- Ask if the bulletin’s front cover that day can feature that an image of St. Mary of Magdala announcing the Good News of the Resurrection to the Apostles be printed. Or print the bulletin and your church’s insignia in pink for the day! Also ask that either the decree elevating the liturgical celebration of St. Mary of Magdala from a memorial to a feast or the preface be reprinted or inserted into the bulletin.
- Incorporate music that is welcoming, affirming, and inclusive.
- Invite a sign language interpreter to translate the Mass in real time for people with different hearing abilities.
- Have a information sheets about St. Mary of Magdala and feminism available to share with your community. There is a lot of misconception in our Church about who Mary of Magdala was and about what feminism is.
- Ask if the readings can be proclaimed with inclusive language that day.
- Some priests are choosing to remain in silence during their homily, in solidarity with the silencing of women’s voices on the altar. Perhaps your priest will want to do this, too. Or perhaps they want to speak about their own feelings of solidarity with Catholic women, or their own reasons for praying for a Church beyond sexism -- especially today in light of the important role that Mary of Magdala (and other women) played in the Jesus movement and early church.

MARY OF MAGDALA PRAYER SERVICE

Celebrating Feminism & Faith in Union

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Call to Prayer:

LEADER: In every generation women, like Mary of Magdala, 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, pastoral ministers, chaplains and yes, priestly people offering their gifts to the the people of God.

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 feminists -- women and men -- gather together 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 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 women throughout the world, whose demands for justice and inclusion call us to conversion.

ALL: We gather in hope for our church, that - with our help - it might become a place of radical inclusion and justice, and equality without qualification.

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: Please take a moment to welcome one another here. And share with each other some sign of peace.

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 boldly proclaim the truth of our experience;

LEADER: Holy Spirit, animator of women throughout space and time,

ALL: Guide us as we work to create more just and inclusive structures in our Church and world. AMEN.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Option One

a liturgy of the Word celebrating Feminism and Faith in union (readings printed on the following pages) with optional sung response after each: Refrain from *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.

A reading in Celebration of Feminism and Spirituality in Union

Winter, Miriam Therese. "Feminist Women's Spirituality: Breaking New Ground in the Church." *The Church Women Want: Catholic Women in Dialogue*, edited by Elizabeth A. Johnson, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002, p. 25.

A reading in Celebration of Feminism and Theology in Union

Johnson, Elizabeth A. "Jesus and Women." *Catholic Women Speak: Bringing Our Gifts to the Table*, edited by the Catholic Women Speak Network, Paulist Press, 2015, p. 22.

A reading in Celebration of Feminism and The Social Mission of the Church in Union

Hayes, Diana. "Speaking the Future into Life: The Challenge of Black Women in the Church" *The Church Women Want: Catholic Women in Dialogue*, edited by Elizabeth A. Johnson, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002, p. 94.

A reading in Celebration of Feminism and Faith in Union

Maynard, Emily. "How Feminism Saved My Faith." *Faithfully Feminist: Jewish, Christian & Muslim Feminists on Why We Stay*, edited by Gina Messina-Dysert, Jennifer Zobair, & Amy Levin, White Cloud Press, 2015, p. 119-120.

Gospel: JN 20:1-18

Option Two

a liturgy of the Word using the proper readings for the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene (Lectionary 603). Please consider using the texts as translated in *The Inclusive Language Bible*.

1st Reading: Sgs 3:1-4b or Cor 5:14-17

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

Gospel: John 20:1-18

Option Three

a liturgy of the Word using the texts selected and translated for the Comprehensive Catholic Liturgy Liturgy (visit inclusivelectionary.org for more information)

1st Reading: Judith 9:1, 9b, 10b-13a, 14

Responsorial Psalm: Proverbs 1:20-23, 33

Second Reading: Galatians 3:26-28, 5:1, 13-14, 16a, 22-23a

Gospel: John 4:5-21, 23-29, 39-40

Alternative Readings:

The Gospel attributed to Mary Magdalene the Apostle
Page 9: 5-20; Page 18:13-17

A Reading from the Gospel attributed to Philip the Apostle
Verses 36, 40, 59-6

Preaching Ideas

Preachers could respond to the readings, offering their insights on the readings in light of feminist theology/scripture study; respond to the question "how feminism invigorates/activates/saved my faith"; or how the recovery of the true story of Mary of Magdala is a gift of feminism and faith in union.

First Reading:

A reading in Celebration of Feminism and Spirituality in Union from Miriam Therese Winter

At the heart of feminist women's spirituality is telling it like it is. What began to emerge from our coming together were images and a language fully inclusive of women's experience and more reflective of our relationship to God. We were no longer hidden beneath patriarchal overlays, a subset of the sons of God the Father. We saw ourselves as daughters of Mother God and realized we are all sisters. We found ourselves with a language, with words that put us fully in the picture, not way out there at the margins, and we felt ourselves coming closer to the center of life and church and liturgy ... we were reborn and we were nurtured, and we felt fully alive again.

Winter, Miriam Therese. "Feminist Women's Spirituality: Breaking New Ground in the Church." *The Church Women Want: Catholic Women in Dialogue*, edited by Elizabeth A. Johnson, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002, p. 25.

Second Reading:

A reading – in celebration of feminism and theological reflection in union – from Elizabeth Johnson:

For two thousand years almost all Christian theology has been done by men. After the Second Vatican Council opened the study of theology to laypersons in the Church, many women began to be educated in this field.

Theology in women's hands has discovered Jesus Christ as compassionate friend, liberator from burdens, consoling friend in sorrows, and ally of women's strivings. The blessing that women find in their relationship with Jesus is not simply private and spiritual, though it is certainly that. It affects their lives in public and social domains, inspiring the struggle for liberation from structures of domination in every dimension of life. In Christ's name, society and Church are called to conversion of hearts, minds, and structures so that the reign of God may take firmer hold in this world. This is a challenging view. But the liberating words have already been spoken: "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." Stand up.

Johnson, Elizabeth A. "Jesus and Women." *Catholic Women Speak: Bringing Our Gifts to the Table*, edited by the Catholic Women Speak Network, Paulist Press, 2015, p. 22.

Third Reading:

A reading – in celebration of feminism and the social mission of the church union – from Diane Hayes:

As Christian women who believe in our God-given right to become whoever and whatever we are capable of becoming, womanists challenge not only the black Christian churches but all of Christianity to live out the true, liberating message of Christ, for the truth will set us all free. To be a Christian is to be about the salvation of the world, not through forced conversions, not through the oppression of those who differ in skin color, gender, religion, economic status, or sexual orientation, but through somehow loving a new world into life, a world in which all people can live free.

We must live the life we sing about, challenging ourselves to never be reconciled to any doctrine or ideology that renders us less than human, silent and invisible. We must dismantle the master's house, if necessary, using new tools forged from our own discovery and recovery of our long lost and stolen pasts as women of every race and nation and build a house of God that has "plenty good room" for all to sit down.

Hayes, Diana. "Speaking the Future into Life: The Challenge of Black Women in the Church" *The Church Women Want: Catholic Women in Dialogue*, edited by Elizabeth A. Johnson, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002, p. 94.

Fourth Reading:

A reading – in celebration of feminism and faith in union – from Emily Maynard:

Feminism freed me from the idea that there is one correct universal way to experience womanhood. In turn, this gave me the ability to see faith beyond the rigid boxes I was given. I grew to celebrate Christianity as an incredibly complex, mysterious, and beautiful pursuit instead of a series of rules and recitations. Feminism opened up the door to complexity in my experience of myself and my faith.

So I remain a Christian, in spite of all the pain that religion has poured out on women.

I stay because other women are showing me how to live and pray and lead and build new pathways in faith traditions that have kept us boxed in for so long.

I stay because feminism taught me to accept my life and personhood, both the doubting and the believing parts of myself.

I stay because I've seen how Christianity can fuel justice, not just for women, but for all marginalized people.

I stay because I believe in regeneration, resurrection, and redemption, even when they exist in abusive patriarchal religious structures.

I stay because I know that women matter.

Maynard, Emily. "How Feminism Saved My Faith." *Faithfully Feminist: Jewish, Christian & Muslim Feminists on Why We Stay*, edited by Gina Messina-Dysert, Jennifer Zobair, & Amy Levin, White Cloud Press, 2015, p. 119-120.

First Reading

A Reading from the Book of Judith 9:1, 9b, 10b-13a, 14

Judith, destined to liberate her people, prostrated herself, scattered ashes on her head, and undressed as far as the sackcloth she was wearing. Just as the evening incense was being offered in the temple of God in Jerusalem, Judith prayed:

“God of my ancestors,
Give me, a widow, a strong hand to execute my plan.
Crush the arrogance of our enemies by the hand of a woman.

Your strength, O God, is not in numbers,
nor does Your might depend upon the powerful.
You are God of the humble, the lowly,
Helper of the oppressed, those of little account,
Supporter of the weak,
Refuge of the forsaken,
Hope for those in despair, Hope for the hopeless.

Please, Please, God, my God,
God of my ancestors,
God of our heritage,
You who stir and move the waters,
Creator of all that is, Creator of the Cosmos,
Hear my prayer.

Let my words wound and bruise
those who plan dire things against the oppressed.

Let Your whole universe and all peoples of Earth
know and understand that You are God,
the God who empowers the powerless,
the God whose might is with the meek,
and that it is You alone who shield Your people.”

The Word of a Wisdom storyteller.
Thanks be to God.

Courtesy of The Comprehensive Catholic Lectionary | www.inclusivelectionary.org

Psalm

Book of Proverbs 1:20-23, 33

Our Psalm Response is:

We are called to become fully human.

R: We are called to become fully human.

Woman Wisdom calls aloud in the street, out in the open.

In the public squares, she raises her voice.

At the busiest corners and on top of the wall, she takes her stand.

At the city gate, she speaks.

R: We are called to become fully human.

“How long, O Thoughtless Ones,

will you wallow in ignorance?

How long, you who mock me,

will you delight in your mocking arrogance?

And Fools, how long will you hate knowledge, refusing to learn?”

R: We are called to become fully human.

“Give heed to my reproof, and follow me:

I will pour out my spirit on you.

I will make my words known to you.

You who listen to me will have inner strength.

You will live in peace, without fear of harm.”

R: We are called to become fully human.

Second Reading

A Reading from Paul's Letter to the Galatians 3:26-28, 5:1, 13-14, 16a, 22-23a

In Jesus the Christ you are all born of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Judean or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; all of you are one in Jesus the Christ.

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

You, my sisters and brothers, were called to be free. Use your freedom to serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

So I say, live by the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

The Word of the Apostle Paul.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel

A Reading from the Gospel attributed to John 4:5–21, 23-29, 39–40
Glory to You, O God.

Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob and Rachel gave to their son Joseph. The well of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water at the well. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman responded, “How is it that you, a Judean, ask a drink of me, a woman and a Samaritan?” (Judeans do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked me for a drink, and I would have given you living water.”

The woman said to Jesus, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestors who gave us the well; who with their children and flocks drank from it?” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to the Fullness of Life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.” Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband.’ You’ve had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!”

The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Dear Woman, trust this. The hour is coming when you will worship our Loving God neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. The hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship our Loving God in spirit and truth, for God seeks worshipers such as these. God is spirit, and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth.”

The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming” (who is called the Christ). “When the Messiah comes, that one will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am the one of whom you speak.”

Just then Jesus’ disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said out loud to her, “What do you want?” or to Jesus, “Why are you speaking with her?” Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, “Come and see someone who told me everything I’ve ever done! Could this one be Messiah?”

Many Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I’ve ever done.”

When the Samaritans came to Jesus, they asked him to stay with them. He stayed there two days.

The Gospel of our God.
Praise to You, Jesus the Christ.

ALTERNATIVE READINGS: If either of these readings is used as a First or Second Reading, the CCL would conclude with “The Word of a second century Evangelist. Thanks be to God.” If either is used as the Gospel, the CCL would conclude with “The Gospel of our God. Praise to you, Jesus the Christ.”

The Gospel attributed to Mary Magdalene the Apostle

Page 9: 5-20; Page 18:13-17

Having spoken, the teacher departed. The disciples were in sorrow, shedding many tears, and saying, “How are we to go among the peoples and announce the Good News of the Kin-dom of a new Humanity, embodied in our Teacher? They did not spare his life, so why should they spare ours?”

Then Mary arose, embraced them all, and began to speak to her brothers, “Do not remain in sorrow and doubt, for his Grace will guide and comfort you. Instead of lamenting his loss, let us praise his greatness, for he has prepared us for this. He is calling upon us to become fully human.”

In this way, Mary turned their hearts towards the Good, and they began to discuss the meaning of the teacher’s words.

A Reading from the Gospel attributed to Philip the Apostle

Verses 36, 40, 59-60

There were three who always walked with the Christ: Mary, his mother, and her sister, and the Magdalene, the one who was called his companion. His sister and his mother and his companion were each a Mary...

Sophia Wisdom is barren, without child. For this reason, she is called “a trace of salt”; ...the Holy Spirit’s [children] ... and [Wisdom’s] children are many... Wisdom, who is called “the barren,” is the mother of the angels. And the companion of the [Christ was] Mary Magdalene. [Jesus] loved her more than all the disciples, and used to kiss her often on her mouth.

The rest of the disciples...said to him “Why do you love her more than all of us?” The Christ answered and said to them, “Why do I not love you like her? When a blind man and one who sees are both together in darkness, they are no different from one another. When the light comes, then the one who sees will see the light, and the who is blind will remain blind.”

Set up for the reflection and ritual

This ritual is comprised of three parts or movement: A litany asking Mary of Magdala to be present with/ pray for us; a blessing; and a time for reflection and an opportunity for a written response.

During the blessing, ask those who are gathered to turn toward their neighbor and make some sign of blessing on each other as the blessing is read.

After the blessing, ask those gathered to reflect by posing the prompt, “Feminism and Faith in Union _____” or something similar. Ask them to consider what feminism and faith means for/to them. To help begin this period reflection, you might consider having the presider or others offer their own prepared response. *Some examples might include: Feminism and Faith in Union creates more just structures in our church and world, Feminism invigorates my faith, feminism and faith in union builds up the body of Christ, feminism and faith in union helps me relate to the Divine, feminism and faith in union inspired me to become a social justice activist, etc.*

After some time for reflection, invite participants to write their response on a card or sheet of paper and place it somewhere within the liturgical space. While responses can remain anonymous, it would certainly be beneficial for all gathered if the responses were placed somewhere that they could be viewed by all during or after the celebration. You might consider decorating the area with items like a candle.

For this you will need:

- Pens or pencils for each participant
- A card/sheet(s) for them to write on. Consider placing 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 (perhaps a center table, altar, or board). Consider ways to share these responses with your larger community -- by keeping the board up for some period of time, putting a few of them in a parish bulletin or newsletter, etc.
- 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

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.

LITANY TO SAINT MARY MAGDALA

LEADER: *(in these or similar words)*

In a few moments we will bless each other and together claim our full humanity. And so, we now call upon Mary of Magdala, asking her to be with us and to pray with us. **Our response is: Be with us!**

READER:

We know her as Mary Magdalene or Mary of Magdala. We associate this name with a town. But in Luke's Gospel, she is "Mary, called Magdalene." This title is similar to "Simon, called Peter." Just as *petra* means rock in Greek, *magdala* means fortress temple, watchtower, stronghold, and elevated pulpit in the in Aramaic and Hebrew.

And so we ask, Mary, Tower-Fortress-The Magdalene, R: Be with us!

The gospels name Mary of Magdala first and foremost as one of the women who funded Jesus, allowing the good-news movement to extend from Galilee all the way to Jerusalem.

And so we ask, Mary, Patron of the Movement, R: Be with us!

In the gospels, Mary and other women in the movement "ministered to [Jesus]." The Greek word *diakonos* means minister.

And so we ask, Mary, diakonos-minister, R: Be with us!

Mary of Magdala stood with many women until the bitter end, witnessing Jesus die on the cross even after all his male companions had scattered. She with other women went to the tomb with myrrh and entered into the rituals of mourning and burial.

And so we ask, Mary, pain-bearer, R: Be with us!

In the gospels, Mary - either alone or with other women - is the first to experience the Resurrected Jesus. And she is commissioned by Jesus to go and tell the others the good news of his Resurrection

And so we ask, Mary, bringer of the good news of Resurrection, R: Be with us!

The early Christian community knew Mary as an important leader and for her role as the first proclaimer of the Resurrection early Church fathers called her the "Apostle to the Apostles."

And so we ask, Mary, Apostle to the Apostles and evangelist, R: Be with us!

Adapted from "Thirteen Ways of Calling Out To Mary Magdalene" developed by The Women Who Stayed, the women's ministry at the Church of St. Francis Xavier, NYC.

BLESSING AND EMPOWERMENT

participants are asked to turn to their neighbor and make some sign of blessing over the named body part as the blessing is read

LEADER: *(in these or similar words)*

In blessing our foreheads, we claim the power of reason, to know the paths that lead to the fulfillment of our hopes for a liberated human kind.

In blessing our eyes, we claim the power of vision, to see clearly the forces of life and death in our midst.

In blessing our ears, we claim the power to the Spirit of God as she speaks to us within.

In blessing our lips, we claim the power to speak the truth to power, to tell of our experience, and to name ourselves and our God.

In blessing our hands, we claim our power as co-creators of a new humanity liberated from fear, ignorance, and oppression.

In blessing our feet, we claim the power to walk the paths of our foremothers in faith and to forge new paths when they are needed.

In blessing each other, in our wholeness, we claim the power that rests collectively in us. We choose to extend this power in service to our church and a world in need.

AMEN.

From *More Than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities* by Pat Schaffran and Pat Kozak. (c)1988 Pat Kozak, CSJ and Janet Schaffran, CDP. Published by The Crossroad Publishing Company.

TIME FOR REFLECTION AND RESPONSE

Participants are given time to reflect upon and respond to the prompt “Feminism and Faith in Union _____.” Invite participants to write their brief response on a card or sheet of paper and place it in the designated area.

You might consider having some gentle, reflective music playing while participants are reflecting and transitioning into song after participants have placed their responses in the designated area.

PRAYERS OF PETITION

ALL RESPOND: HEAR US, O GOD

LEADER: Blessed and empowered, and confident in God's desire for wholeness for us and for the world, we offer these needs and prayers.

We pray in gratitude for all the women of the Church who have come before us as prophets and teachers. May their legacies inspire us to make known the ways God is speaking to us today through women.

We pray for the women of our community, that all of our gifts may be welcomed, received, and put to work for God's greatest good. May our community be a place of inclusion and affirmation for all.

We pray for Pope Francis, that he may continue to be guided by the Spirit of Sophia Wisdom and remain increasingly committed to creating a Church that welcomes all women as God's equally beloved children.

We pray for an end to poverty and homelessness, which disproportionately affect women, children, and oppressed populations around the globe. May we who have resources and influence work to create security and sustainability for our sisters and brothers.

We pray for an end to violence against all human beings, and especially against women. May we who are safe protect those in danger.

We pray for Church dialogue that is inclusive and welcoming. May we who seek justice have the patience to lead with love.

We pray for our priests and bishops, that they might have the courage to work with women as equal partners in teaching and sharing the faith of the Gospel.

We pray for those called to Catholic priesthood and ordained by God, who have been rejected by the institution or denied by us because of gender, sexual orientation, or other unjust disqualifiers. May we become a Church that recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in all of God's people and strives to create the pathways that allow the fullness of God's plan to manifest.

We pray for those who have suffered emotional or physical abuse at the hands of someone they trust or persons of authority. May our hearts overflow with compassion as we accompany the wounded in their journey for healing and call for change.

We pray for those whose voices we do not hear in our parishes, workplaces, and communities. May the Spirit of Discipleship awaken in us the desire to seek the lost and forsaken and return them to the fold of God's love.

Prayers of Petition Courtesy of Feminism and Faith in Union. www.feminism-faith.org

LEADER:

Loving God, Mother and Father,

We offer these prayers in faith and hope, confident in your endless and transformative love.

ALL: AMEN

CONCLUDING RITES

Closing Prayer:

LEADER: Let us pray,

God of Wisdom, You breathe into our hearts in every moment, whispering the sacred power of the feminine.

ALL: Open our spirits to receive your grace in all the ways You invite women to be Your holy messengers and ministers.

LEADER: God of Creativity, You show us who You are in our mothers, today in Mary of Magdala and so many other women

ALL: Open our eyes to see You in every woman, each of whom You created in Your exquisite image.

LEADER: God of Infinite Love, You bless us with the gift of diversity, showing Your face to us in every act of love and compassion.

ALL: Open our hearts to receive the wounded and the wounders, committing to love all as You have taught us to love. AMEN.

Closing Prayer courtesy of Feminism and Faith in Union. www.feminism-faith.org.

Closing Song Suggestions:

Sing a New Church, ©1991 Delores Dufner, OSB, The Sisters of Saint Benedict, OCP Publications
We Are Called, ©1988 David Haas, GIA Publications, Inc.



LIFTING UP WOMEN'S VOICES

Work to Reclaim and Tell the True story of Mary of Magdala

- visit www.reclaimmagdalene.org for information, resources and projects to get involved with
- use the hashtags #ReclaimMagdala and/or #ReclaimMagdalene on social media when posting about Mary of Magdala or your celebration

Promote Women in the Preaching Ministry of the Church

- visit www.catholicwomenpreach.org to see women preach on the weekly readings
- incorporate this preaching into community Bible studies, adult formation classes, and other gatherings as appropriate
- ask prepared women in your community to write reflections on the weekly readings and include them in your community/parish bulletin or email
- Advocate for greater latitude in allowing prepared women pastoral ministers to preach on a regular basis in your parish/diocese. If your diocese does not have an institute to prepare lay preachers, encourage the formation of one

Advocate for the Restoration of Women Deacons

- visit www.catholicwomendeacons.org for resources and information on all the suggestions below
- host an informational session or sessions on women in the diaconate
- Invite your local clergy into a dialogue about the need for restoring women deacons and the need for women deacons in your local community using the DeaconChat materials
- If you are a women who has discerned or is discerning a call to the diaconate share your story through the 100 Women Deacons campaign or attend a FutureChurch women deacons retreat (info@futurechurch.org)
- Write a letter to your bishop, inviting him to learn more about women deacons in the early church and tell him how you see a need for restoring women deacons today
- Organize a prayer service for the Study Commission on Women Deacons in your community. Visit <http://www.ignatianspiritualcenter.org/women-deacons.html> to download materials developed by FutureChurch and the Ignatian Spiritual Life Center.

ignatianspiritualcenter.org/women-deacons.html to download materials developed by FutureChurch and the Ignatian Spiritual Life Center.

Host a “Listening to Women” listening session in your community or invite local clergy to do so

- visit www.listeningtowomen.org to learn more about this joint effort and download resources for hosting your own listening session
- if your community is unwilling or unable to host such a listening session, consider hosting one in your own home or in a community center and presenting a report to your community leadership

Join FutureChurch and the Association of US Catholic Priests in advocating for the reform of seminary formation

- In January 2018, the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests issued a letter to Cardinal Joseph Tobin and the USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations urging them to reform the current program for seminary formation.
- FutureChurch shares AUSCP’s concern about the state of priestly formation and supports these efforts for reform. In February 2015, the Center for Applied Research reported that younger cohorts of priests are increasingly less inclined to welcome lay women and men as co-workers than their Vatican II counterparts. It is clear that current formation programs do not prepare priests for a church where women and laity have a growing role in the life, ministry, and governance of the Church - a troubling trend that does not bode well for the future life of the Church and the Gospel mission.
- Visit futurechurch.org/seminaryreform to view the letter, FutureChurch’s statement of support, and a customizable letter to send to Cardinal Tobin and the USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations

WOMEN IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Mary of Magdala

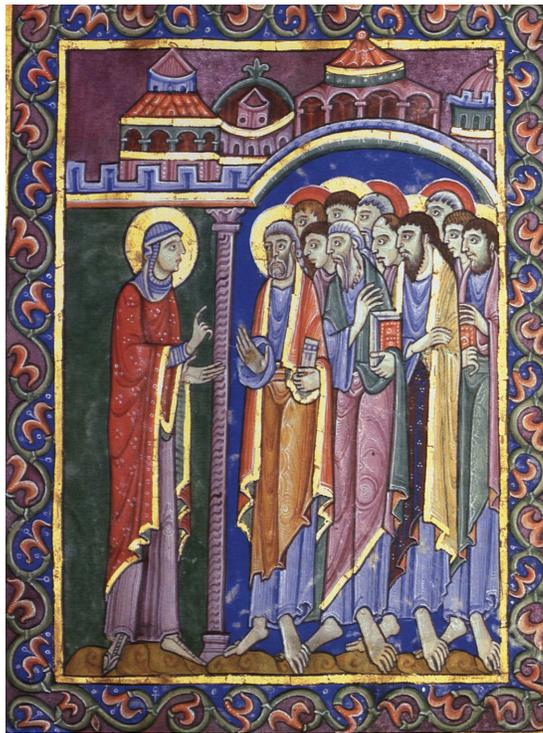


Image of page 51 of the *St. Albans Psalter*, depicting Mary of Magdala announcing the Resurrection to the Apostles. Produced in England, St. Albans Abbey, ca. 1119–23.

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. Photo by J. Vericker. 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

PLEASE JOIN US IN THE ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF MARY OF MAGDALA'S FEAST DAY ON JULY 22ND

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:
www.futurechurch.org
or email: info@futurechurch.org

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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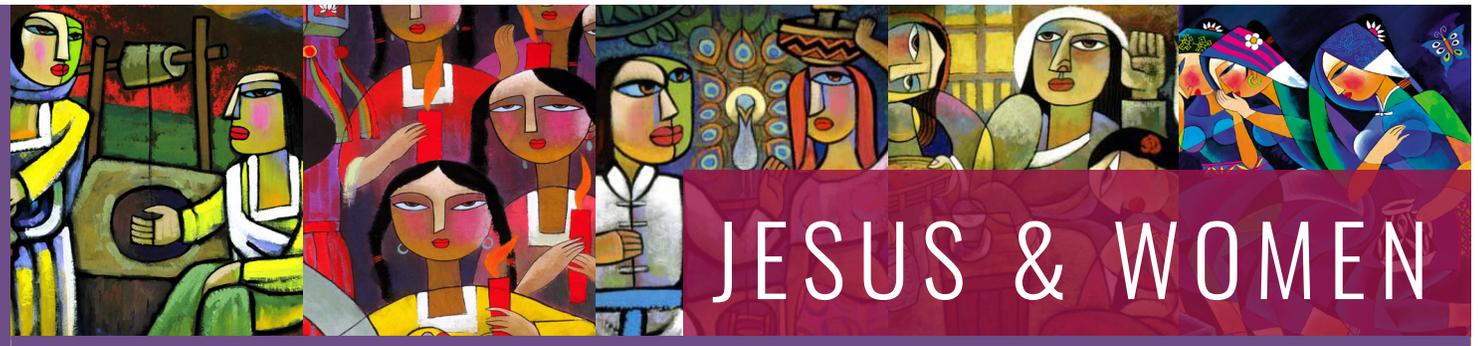
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JESUS & WOMEN



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 synagogal 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.

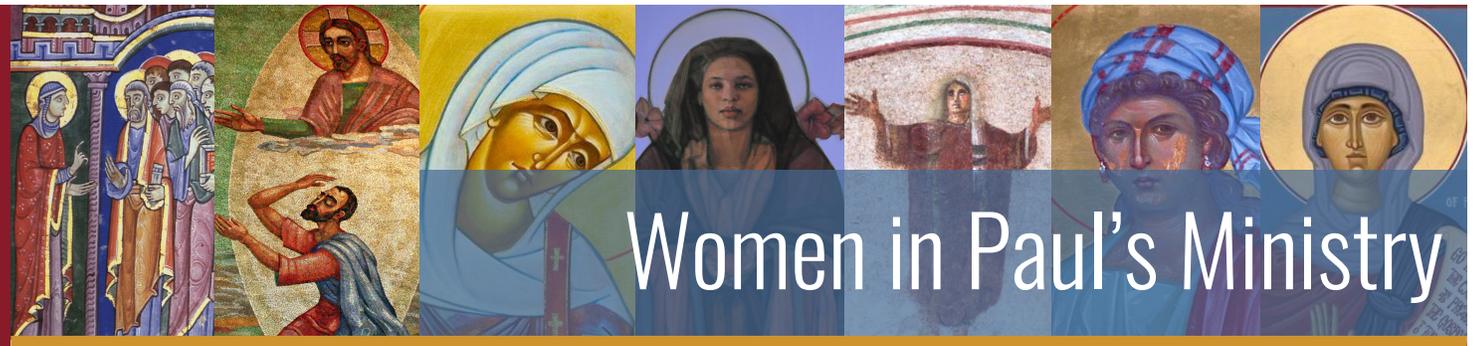
The Book of Acts refers to "Phillip's prophetic daughters" (Acts 21:9-10). The early church historian Eusebius, attributes the apostolic origins of the provincial Asian churches to their ministry, thereby acknowledging that at least some women

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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Women in Paul's Ministry

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



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

Philippi was a Roman military colony, it seems to 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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