

Marist
ASSOCIATION OF
ST MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

Local Group Formation 2024

WISDOM






Mary Magdalene,
Wisdom Figure

Mary Magdalene, Wisdom Figure

The theme 'First Light' invites us to consider God at work within us, drawing us forward into a space of generativity, creativity and ongoing transformation, with love at the centre. It draws on the presence of God at the centre of our lives through the ongoing dynamism of the Holy Spirit.

Wisdom literature depicts the Holy Spirit, Sophia, as a vital source of life and light, as the personification of God: ". . . a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all" (Wisdom 7:22-23).



Later biblical texts of course present Jesus as the embodiment of God's wisdom, but we can also describe Mary Magdalene as a biblical 'wisdom figure'. Theologian Cynthia Bourgeault explains how this is so, in her discussion of the dynamic between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. 

Her description of Jesus as a wisdom figure who taught by conscious presence is a useful one, relying not on ideologies or dogmas but a heart-knowing of the transformative power of God's love. Perhaps we can all think of people in our own lives with a similar capacity to speak truth from the heart, empowering us to listen deeply to the truth within each of us.

Questions to ponder and discuss

- What do you understand to mean by the statement that Jesus and Mary Magdalene are wisdom teachers?
- Who are the wisdom teachers in your life?
- How can you personally draw on the example of Mary Magdalene when faced with crisis, difficulty, abandonment, suffering as well as hope, emerging ideas and possibilities?

Mary Magdalene, Apostle to the Apostles

Brendan Byrne SJ described Mary Magdalene as the last to remain and the first to return.

Recall the words of the Gospel of John (20:1-18):

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb.

The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in

white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.'

When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher).

Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

The image of Mary Magdalene as apostle to the apostles is an inspiring one for us living God's mission today. **This reflection from Joan Chittister OSM explores how the role of Mary Magdalene in the Easter story is a model for us all:**

Easter confronts us with the greatest challenge of them all: faith in darkness. Just because we know that what we're doing is right does not mean that it will be easy. It certainly does not mean that even our best efforts will prevail. It finally does not mean that what we live for will happen in our lifetime.

Mary Magdalene is our model. She was one of the women who, according to Luke's Gospel, "followed Jesus, supporting him out of their own substance." She banked her whole life on the fact that the vision of this Jesus would come to fullness.

She believed in him and everything he believed in: She believed in the Beatitudes. She believed that the curing of cripples was a more important moment in time than even the celebration of the Sabbath. She believed in women as he did and in the poor as he did and in the reform of the synagogue. As he did. She believed in him first, before anyone else, and she followed him to the end, even when all the others had disappeared.

She followed him in the light and, finally, like the rest of us, she followed him in darkness. She went to the tomb, to the place where it was clear that failure lay. But she went in the faith that what had come to life in her because of him, even if suppressed in the world around her for a while, could not die. Not in those who had been touched by him. Never in her. Not really.

It was then that she found him risen. Gone. Beyond the grasp of those living in whom there was no life and who had wanted him dead so that their own death-dealing could go on.

The message to us is a clear one. When we follow Jesus, the path is often through darkness to what looks to the world—to us—like failure and defeat. But when we ourselves carry the message of Jesus—when we live the life of Jesus here and now, when we, too, confront the world around us with the blessedness of those poor, those outcast, those foreigners, those women, those voiceless for whom Jesus gave his life—we carry within ourselves the promise of new life. We live the ongoing message of the Resurrection itself: What comes in the name of Jesus will not die. The darkness will not overcome it as long as we ourselves never blow out the light of Truth in our own hearts. Alleluia.

To ponder and discuss

- How can the image of Mary Magdalene as 'apostle to the apostles' inspire living faith in the contemporary world?



Image: Mary Magdalene by Fr Sieger Köder

THE MAGDALENE'S BLESSING

You hardly imagined
standing here,
everything you ever loved
suddenly returned to you,
looking you in the eye
and calling your name.

And now
you do not know
how to abide this hole
in the center
of your chest,
where a door
slams shut
and swings open
at the same time,
turning on the hinge
of your aching
and hopeful heart.

I tell you,
this is not a banishment
from the garden.

This is an invitation,
a choice,
a threshold,
a gate.

This is your life
calling to you
from a place
you could never
have dreamed,

but now that you
have glimpsed its edge,
you cannot imagine
choosing any other way.

So let the tears come
as anointing,
as consecration,
and then
let them go.

Let this blessing
gather itself around you.

Let it give you
what you will need
for this journey.

You will not remember
the words—
they do not matter.

All you need to remember
is how it sounded
when you stood
in the place of death
and heard the living
call your name.

Jan Richardson

from Circle of Grace:

A Book of Blessings for the Seasons



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