

-liest references to Claudia Procula's conversion to Christianity date from the second-century Christian writer, [Origen](#). Nevertheless, she is venerated as Saint Procla by the Orthodox Church. Pilate's wife has never been recognised as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church. On the contrary some medieval theologians interpreted her dream as coming from the [devil](#), who wished to prevent salvation. Other Western Christians, e.g. Saint Augustine and Saint Jerome, did accept her dream as divinely inspired. An interesting footnote: In the 1920s, a lead sarcophagus was discovered in [Beirut](#) containing two bracelets inscribed with the name Claudia Procula in Greek. Though some parts of the find seemed older, the find was initially dated to the third century. In 1984 the Australian archaeologist, Dr Jill Carington Smith dated the find to the first century. She noted that on this basis it is possible that the woman could have been the wife of Pontius Pilate, though she accepted that there is no evidence that Pilate was ever in Beirut and the name Claudia Procula is evidenced elsewhere. Yet another unsolved enigma about this woman!

Next Week: *Barabbas*.....

Stephen S

Entrance antiphon: My eyes are always on the Lord, for he rescues my feet from the snare. Turn to me and have mercy on me , for I am alone and poor.

First Reading: Exodus 3: 1-8, 13-15

Psalms 102: Response: The Lord is compassion and love.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Gospel Acclamation: Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God! Repent, says the Lord, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God!

Gospel: Luke 13: 1-9

Memorial Acclamation: Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.



The Vine Dresser and the Fig Tree by James Tissot (public domain)

Third Sunday of Lent Sunday Cycle C, 2022

Weekly Reflection: Minor Players in the Passion (3): Pilate's wife

Pontius Pilate's wife is not named in the Gospels. She appears only in St Matthew's Passion (27:19). While Pilate

was sitting on the judgment seat waiting for the crowd's decision on whether to free Jesus or Barabbas, St Matthew writes: *"his wife sent word to him, 'have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much over Him today in a dream"*. On the basis of this one, soundly-based scriptural reference, in conjunction with a number of allusions in the Apocrypha, Pilate's wife has become across the centuries an elusively fascinating personality.

According to these other sources Pilate's wife was Claudia Procula, one of Augustus' granddaughters, being the daughter of Julia, the wife of Tiberius. Tiberius had exiled Julia shortly before Claudia's birth and there were serious doubts as to Claudia's paternity. When Julia died Tiberius legitimised Claudia. Being married to a woman of such high birth was a boost to Pilate's status and was probably material in his securing the governorship of Judaea in AD 26. Pilate's wife was interested in Judaism and may well have been a convert to it to some extent. Therefore, the trial of Jesus was of significance to her. She also had the religious and political antennae to realise that He was a *"righteous man."* A woman and a Roman, she is the only person recorded as having tried to stop the inexorable pressure to crucify Jesus. It has been pointed out that seven surprising people recognised Jesus' innocence during the Passion: — (i) Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27:4), (ii) Pontius Pilate (Luke 23:4), (iii) Herod, (Luke 23:15), (iv) The Dying Thief (Luke 23:41), (v) The Roman Centurion (Luke 23:47), (vi) The Roman Guards (Matthew 27:54) and (vii) Pilate's wife.

The Apocryphal texts, some of which state that both Pilate and his wife later became Christians, cannot be regarded as providing safe evidence. The ear-