

PARISHES OF  
**ST PIUS X, ALDERLEY EDGE, ST BENEDICT'S, HANDFORTH AND**  
**SACRED HEART & ST TERESA'S WILMSLOW**  
**WEEKLY REFLECTION**

**Sunday 20th April 2025: Easter Sunday**  
**Mary Magdalene - Apostle to the Apostles**

**‘Do not hold on to me - go to my brothers and tell them’**

At the end of today's reading from John's gospel we are told, 'the disciples then went back home'. But Mary Magdalene does not - she stays by the tomb. What follows is a passage (John 20:11-18) strikingly similar in many ways to the Annunciation story in Luke 1:26-38, and it is notable that these passages bookend the entire gospel story of the life of Christ.

If we place ourselves into the scene in John's gospel, we witness an incredibly tender meeting. Mary is heartbroken and in despair as she tells the angels, 'They have taken my Lord away... and I don't know where they have put him.' Mary had stayed at the tomb out of her love for the Christ who had redeemed her. She longed to be with Him; Christ who had first loved her.

Jesus has only to say her name and she recognises Him. When Jesus goes on to say, 'do not hold on to me' or, in other translations, 'do not cling to me', we can picture Mary embracing Him as she cries out 'Rabbuni' ('Master' in Hebrew). Jesus goes on to command her 'go to my brothers and tell them: I am ascending to my Father...'

There are a number of ways Mary could have reacted - she might have been completely overwhelmed, or not wanted to share the news. But instead we are told she went to the disciples, it would appear straight away, with the news 'I have seen the Lord.'

Jesus' command to Mary builds upon the command he gave to the Twelve at the Last Supper. On what we now call Holy Thursday, Jesus established the Ministerial Priesthood, when he instituted the Eucharist.

The passover of the old covenant is transformed before the Apostles' eyes. In Jesus' command to the Twelve 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me' (Luke 22:19) he establishes the new covenant whereby His body and blood become the sacrifice, fulfilled on the cross for us. And as the old order passes away, the Apostles become the new heirs to the priesthood of Melchizedek. And, through ordination, priests become an 'Alter Christus'.

In being the Apostle to the Apostles - the person who took the news of Christ's resurrection to the men who would go on, through the line of Apostolic Succession, to found the Church - Mary Magdalene established the apostolate of all lay people; men and women. In the married or single life we are called to imitate Mary Magdalene in a three-fold manner:

- To spend time with Jesus in the Eucharist and in doing so encounter the Risen Christ;
- To go into the world to carry out the work of true and authentic evangelisation - to proclaim the Good News of the kingdom to the whole world and to be Christ's foot soldiers;
- To do all we can to promote and encourage vocations to the Ministerial Priesthood through our life and our prayer.

As Our Lady became the first person to whom the arrival of the Messiah was announced, so Mary Magdalene becomes the first person to whom Jesus appears after His resurrection. As through Our Lady's fiat, her 'yes' to God, Jesus was able to come into the world, so through the action of Mary Magdalene in announcing the Risen Christ to the disciples, the mission of the Church in the world was established.

Rachel Grayson

N.B It is worth mentioning that the writers of all four of the gospels make women the most important witnesses to the resurrection - the most important event of Christianity. This is despite the fact that, in Jesus' time, women were not considered valid legal witnesses and their evidence would generally not have been accepted (as noted by the Anglican theologian and Pauline scholar Rt Revd Prof N.T. Wright in his book 'The Resurrection of the Son of God').