

Life

Several women in the gospel may be Mary Magdalene. Regarding the historical facts of this saint, Bible commentaries have different opinions. According to the Hong Kong Diocesan Liturgy Commission's webpage about this saint, Jesus drove out seven devils from her, and she followed Jesus with his disciples (Luke 8: 2). She was the sister of Jesus' friend Lazarus and Martha. Martha complained that when she was busy entertaining Jesus, Mary sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Jesus said Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her (Luke 10: 38-42). Mary Magdalene witnessed Jesus' death on the cross. The resurrected Christ first appeared to her and told her to report to the disciples. Mary Magdalene anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair (John 12: 3), but she was not the sinful woman mentioned in Luke's Gospel to wash Jesus' feet with tears, and anointed them with ointment (Luke 7: 36-50).

Reflection/resolution

The recent Popes have particularly respected Mary Magdalene. St. John Paul II's "Mulieris Dignitatem" (Dignity and Vocation of Women) attaches great emphasis to the unique role of Mary Magdalene. She is the first witness of Christ's resurrection and the first messenger to proclaim that Jesus has resurrected to the disciples. Pope Benedict XVI said to the audience on July 23, 2006: "The story of Mary Magdalene reminds us of a fundamental truth: the disciple of Christ is one who has experienced human weaknesses, humbly seeks the Lord's help, has been healed by him and began to follow him to become a witness of his compassionate love, which is more powerful than sin and death". Pope Francis spoke to the faithful who speaks the Arabic language after his general audience on May 17, 2017: "Mary Magdalene taught us to persevere in encountering the resurrected Lord, so as not to let death and sadness extinguish our desire to meet Jesus. . . Our encounter with the resurrected Jesus enables us to gain eternal life and help others resurrect from the dark graves of disbelief."

St. Thomas Aquinas calls Mary Magdalene "Apostle of the Apostles". In 2016, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments abided by the Pope's intention to raise Mary Magdalene's memorial to a feast, equivalent to the status of the apostles. Archbishop Arthur Roche, secretary of Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments said that the move was "right", as Mary Magdalene "is the witness of the resurrection of Christ, the first person to break the news of his resurrection to the disciples just like the rest of the apostles", he also pointed out that the decision made people reflect "more deeply on women's dignity, new evangelization and the mystery of God's great mercy."

Prayer

Some people interpret Martha and Mary as a symbol of the contrast between ministry and prayer, believing that Jesus' answer shows that contemplation is more important than the action to serve God and others. Is that what Jesus thinks? Don't forget the Risen Christ told Mary, "Do not hold on to me"(John 20:17) and told her to spread the good news of his resurrection to the disciples. In fact, there is no conflict between ministry and prayer. We need to establish a deep relationship with the Lord through prayers, so that we have the power to calmly face the challenges of life, serve others and spread the gospel. On July 21, 2019, Pope Francis shared his opinions with the faithful: "This gospel reminds us to combine contemplation and action with wisdom to merge these two elements to serve others."

May we learn from St. Mary Magdalene to encounter the resurrected Christ and become his witnesses in life.

St. Mary Magdalene, pray for us.