

Holy Trinity Anglican Church
Reverend Michael Fleming
Lent Five
March 21,2021

Celebrant: The parishes of the Diocese of Ottawa sit on the unceded territory of the Algonquin nation.

All: **May we live together in harmony, unity and peace.**

Celebrant: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: **And also with you.**

Opening Prayer

Celebrant: Lord, as we approach the end of the Lenten season and begin our deep preparation for Holy Week and Easter, we thank you for being present to us through this season of reflection, penitence and grace. Guide our hearts and spirits as we come to the gates of the City – help us to shout our praises of and to you, the Creator and Giver of all as we enter the time of trial, temptation and testing not only for your Son Jesus, but for each of us. Grant us strength, wisdom and courage to follow the path you have set before us now and always. Amen

Celebrant Almighty God,
**All to you all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from you no secrets are hidden.
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Trisagion

All: **Holy God, holy and mighty; holy immortal one, have mercy on us (3x)**

Celebrant: Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us with the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The First Reading - Jeremiah 31: 31-34

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

"This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Psalm - 119: 9-16

How shall a young man cleanse his way? By keeping to your words.

With my whole heart I seek you; let me not stray from your commandments.

I treasure your promise in my heart, that I may not sin against you.

Blessed are you, O Lord; instruct me in your statutes.

With my lips will I recite all the judgements of your mouth.

I have taken greater delight in the way of your decrees than in all manner of riches.

I will meditate on your commandments and give attention to your ways.

My delight is in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

The Second Reading - Hebrews 5: 5-10

In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,

"You are my Son; today I have become your Father."^[a]

And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

So though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Gospel

Reader The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Reader The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ according to the Blessed St. John. 20:1-18

People **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

The Gospel of Christ.

Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ

Homily - "Apostle to the Apostle"

A number of years ago, Bishop Chapman called me to tell me that he wanted to make me a Canon of the Cathedral Chapter. I was honoured and thrilled. Bishop John asked me which Canonical stall I wanted and fortunately I knew enough about cathedrals to understand that the Canons of a Cathedral sit in stalls or their own pews in the choir which are named for a variety of saints etc... When Bishop John asked me, I replied, "I would love to sit in the Stall of Mary of Magdala" to which I got the response, "O, she isn't one of the stalled saints." So, I

opted for St. Andrew for two reasons: first, my son's name and second my Scottish heritage. One footnote: there is now a stall dedicated to Mary of Magdala in our cathedral - perhaps I had some small role to play in that decision?

On this, the last Sunday before the beginning of Holy Week, I want to speak about my favourite saint and then tie together the seven persons we have met in this Lenten series on living the Kingdom of God.

Her name is Mary of Magdala or Mary Magdalene or The Magdalene or The Madelaine - and she was one of the most reviled and dismissed of the company of disciples until the recent past. I have always been attracted to her story and her struggle to be accepted by the powers that be, both in her own time and down through history and maybe that's why she is so special to me! She was also a member of that most put-upon class in her society - she was a woman in a male-oriented and dominated culture. Not only was she a woman, but one who didn't seem to know "her place" as that was defined by the misogynistic world in which she lived. I have always sided with the underdogs and so perhaps it is a natural thing for me to find great attraction in her.

Mary was, it seems, independently wealthy - her family owned the largest fish-processing enterprise in the Galilee, selling product from Jerusalem to Athens to Rome and throughout the Empire. She most likely met Jesus on one of his forays into the Galilee. According to Luke, she suffered from seven "demons" and Jesus healed her. Because of this, she left her home and family and joined the ragtag community that was growing around the carpenter from Nazara. Luke describes her in this way, "The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna and many others. These women were helping to support the disciples from their own means." Mary soon became a part of the inner circle around Jesus, along with Peter, James, John and Judas.

There was a closeness shared between her and Jesus which created tensions and conflicts within the fellowship both during and after Jesus' earthly ministry and which eventually caused her to be more or less removed from mention in the later story of the growth of the group known as Followers of The Way or Christ-ians. The rumours and legends (and just downright fabrications and lies) tied to her name are too many to mention - in the first decade of this century, books about Mary and her life in Palestine and then possibly in France and perhaps England, of her possible marriage to Jesus and birthing a child with him, of writing her own memoir or gospel etc... dominated the charts. Regardless of all these, she was identified in the earliest traditions of the Church with two titles - Apostle to the Apostles and Dulcis Amica Dei (Sweet Friend of God) because it was to her that the first revelation of the Resurrection was given.

It was she who went to the tomb near Calvary where Jesus had been hastily interred before sundown on that Passover Friday. She was intent upon preparing Jesus properly according to the dictates and traditions of their people. It was she who met the gardener and asked "Where is my Lord, that I may go and attend to him?". It was her name he called and in the naming, she was to be the bearer of the great treasure news that God had raised His Son from death. The Risen Lord tells Mary to return to where the others are hiding behind the locked door of

that same upper room where they had celebrated the Passover Seder just three days prior and give them the glorious good news, “He is not dead: He is risen and I have seen the Lord”. This is why she was called the Apostle to the Apostles, for she was sent from God to help “prepare the way of the Lord”. The initial reaction is what she expected it to be: disbelief and rejection- after all, such news would never have been given by God to a woman and especially a woman LIKE HER! (or so Peter and the other male disciples thought!). So, literally dragging Peter along, she returns to the empty tomb and lets Peter see for himself.

Mary continues to be a leader in the primitive church but is moved more and more to the sidelines by those keeping and telling the church story. Even though she is named more than any other woman in the gospels, save Jesus’ mother, and more than all the other apostles save Peter, Mary fades from the accepted literature of the community although she was to be central to many of the books which we call the Apocryphal Writings which the early church rejected and she remained a “shadow saint” of the church until Pope Gregory 1 declared in the sixth century that she had been a prostitute whom Jesus had saved. This description held until 1969 when Pope Paul VI declared it a myth. In 2016, Pope Francis pronounced that July 22 was no longer to be observed as a memorial to her but as her feast day and thus she was restored to her dignity and her place of devotion among the apostles – this Apostle to the Apostles and Dulcis Amica Dei – Sweet Friend of God.

I’m not sure why I am so taken with this woman – is it because she has been the victim of theologians and artists for centuries even to this very time when in Jesus Christ Superstar we hear Judas go after Jesus and say:

“It seems a strange thing to me, mystifying, that a man like you can waste his time on women of her kind. Yes, I can understand that she amuses, but to let her stroke you, kiss your hair is hardly in your line. It’s not that I object to her profession, but she doesn’t fit in well with what you do or say. It doesn’t help us if you’re inconsistent – they only need a small excuse to put us all away...” ?

Is it because she gave all her resources and goods so that the ministry could continue in lean times as well as in the good? Is it because of the special bond I believe existed between her and Jesus? Is it because she struggled against the sexism which was never and has never been completely banished from the Church against women?

I think I know the primary reason why Mary is my saint – she was the most faithful of all the followers of Jesus: when his own mother and brothers wanted to take Jesus back to the Galilee because they were afraid he would be harmed by those in the religious and secular world who wanted to see him dead, Mary remained at his side. When Peter refused to acknowledge his Lord before the people gathered in the courtyard of the High Priest that Thursday evening and said three times, “I do not know the man”, it was she who probably whispered, “But I do”. When everyone save John and his mother fled the scene and hid away while their Lord and Saviour was crucified, tortured and murdered, she was at the foot of the Cross, weeping for him and comforting Mary of Galilee whose son’s lifeblood dripped like rain on them. It was she who led the procession of the dead from Calvary to the empty tomb and oversaw the enshrouding of Christ’s body and its being laid on the table of preparation and who watched as the great stone was rolled across the mouth of the grave, sealing Jesus away from her and the world for what seemed an eternity. It was she who came at sunrise to

weep for him and to give his body the love and respect it deserved before he was entombed forever. It was she who showed them all, who showed me what faith is all about – a willingness to bet your life that something or someone is true and that she was willing to risk everything – resources, reputation and life itself because she was willing to proclaim, “Jesus is Lord.”

In these five weeks, we have met:

- children who saw in Jesus something the adults missed and who trusted the stranger with their vulnerabilities - from whom we learn that God asks us to trust him and to open ourselves to receive whatever gifts he wants us to have.
- a rich young man who wanted to belong but wouldn't pay the price yet who sensed love even when he failed - from whom we learn that participating in the Kingdom work involves a willingness to let go of those things that inhibit or block our ability to shine as Christ's light before others
- a young boy who gave Jesus everything he had so that others might share in life-sustaining bread and fish - from whom we learned that what we have been given by God is to be shared with wild abandon and that whatever we give will be returned to us in kind a thousandfold.
- Zaccheus the hated whom Jesus befriended because He saw into the tax collector's heart - in whose witness we learn that each of us is acceptable to God and that our response to God saying “I love you” is to take that into our hearts and hands and then give it away.
- two sisters who loved and clashed with each other and discovered that each was the inheritor and then the giver of great gifts who taught us the joy and beauty of shared ministry of contemplation and action which, when wedded, are a force which the darkness of this world will never overcome.
- and this morning, a woman who stood against all the slings and arrows of her world in her loyalty and commitment to a cause she knew was of and from God – the dawning of the Kingdom of Life.

Each has given us an insight into how we can approach the invitation from Jesus to love one another as he has loved us and through acts of tenderness, kindness and sometimes foolishness, win our own and others souls for Christ.

AMEN

The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

**He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

He will come again

**to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

The Prayers of the People

(With confidence and trust let us pray to the Lord, saying, "Lord, have mercy.")

For the one holy catholic and apostolic Church throughout the world, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the mission of the Church, that in faithful witness it may preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For those preparing for baptism and for their teachers and sponsors, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For peace in the world, that a spirit of respect and reconciliation may grow among nations and peoples, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the poor, the persecuted, the sick, and all who suffer; for refugees, prisoners, and all in danger; that they may be relieved and protected, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For all whom we have injured or offended, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For grace to amend our lives and to further the reign of God, we pray to you, Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

We will exalt you, O God our king;

And praise your name for ever and ever.

We pray for all those who have died in the peace of Christ, and for those whose faith is known to you alone, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom.

Lord, let your loving kindness be upon them;

Who put their trust in you.

We pray to you also for the forgiveness of our sins.

We ask you to watch over all our parish family, remembering especially Zachariah, Marjorie, Cheryl, Jeanette, Roy, Emerson, Irene, Meredith and Mike, and their families. May we, by example, draw others towards the glorious Light of the World.

In the Worldwide Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for The Church of England.

In our Diocesan Cycle, we pray for Christ Church, Bells Corners, and their clergy, The Venerable Kathryn Otley, Major The Reverend Michael Gibbons, and Deacon Tamara Connors.

In our Companion Diocese of Jerusalem and The Middle East, we pray for Saviour Church, Kufr-Yasif, Israel.

Confession and Absolution

Celebrant: Dear friends in Christ, God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy; he welcomes sinners and invites us to his table.

Let us confess our sins, confident in God's forgiveness.

Celebrant: Most merciful God,

we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us, that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

Celebrant: Almighty God have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from all our sins, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

The Peace

Leader: The peace of our Lord be always with you.

All: **And also with you.**

The Lord's Prayer

Celebrant: And now, as our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Additional Prayers

Celebrant: Almighty God, whose Son restored Mary of Magdala to health of mind, body and spirit and called her to be a witness to the resurrection, forgive us and heal us by your grace that we may serve you in the power of his risen life; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen

All: Dear God, we are here today to remember the faithful witness of your daughter Mary of Magdala. We give you thanks for her story which challenges us to live lives of truth encouraged by our brother Jesus. We are emboldened by your gifts of the Holy Spirit, that bold Wisdom-spirit who empowers us today to proclaim your good news of peace and justice in our homes, communities and our world. We ask for your continued blessings upon us as we strive to live your call to be faithful witnesses for Jesus today Amen

(from mercymidatlantic)

Celebrant: Wisdom-Spirit, help us to recognize and accept our call to witness to your power to bring life from death. When Jesus called Mary by name, she recognized him. Saving One, give us ears and eyes to see and hear our true names deep within us. Jesus sent Mary, Salome and the other women disciples to proclaim the Good News to the Apostles, even if they would not believe them. Rabboni, teach us how to proclaim the miracle of your Risen Love in a disbelieving world. Because of her witness and fidelity, Mary Magdala is known as the Apostle to the Apostles. Help us, O God of righteousness, to accept our apostolic call to "go and tell" our sisters and brothers of Jesus' power to heal – even wounded institutions that exclude them. Women were faithful disciples of Jesus and significant leaders in the early church communities. Help us, Most Inclusive One, to reclaim and exercise our baptismal call to service and leadership; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

(from mercymidatlantic)

Dismissal

Celebrant: Faithful witnesses, empowered by the Spirit, we go forth from this gathering. We are guided by the Love of The Creator, the Son and the Holy Spirit. May Mary Magdala be a model for us of courage and faithful service for the Gospel. By her example, may we delight in the presence of Jesus and show in our words and actions our joy at being able to say, "I have seen the Lord." May the peace of the Risen Christ be with us all. Let us go to love and serve the Lord.

(from mercymidatlantic)

All: Thanks be to God. Amen