

Thought for the Week

Thought for the Week is based on one of the day's lectionary readings.

For the Bible online, go to: <http://bible.oremus.org/>

Choose your version (we use NRSV in church)

Copy and paste the reference into the search box and the passage will be displayed.

Wednesday 2st July

John 20.1-2, 11-18

Feast of St Mary Magdalene (22 July)

Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel said 'Anyone who compares the biblical Mary Magdalene with the 'Christian' Mary Magdalene must get very angry'.

Last year on 22 July I spoke about how we must not confuse the various Marys and unnamed women in the gospels since they are several, and very different; but people often have done. Mary Magdalene as a result has been depicted in very negative ways.

John shows her here as the first apostle, the first witness to the resurrection, and short of being the mother of Christ, another Mary, there is no higher status she could have, no more important role. To give her this job was a task of supreme responsibility and trust. This says so much about how Jesus regarded her, against a background of deeply entrenched patriarchy. It's in this light that we should read a poem of Nicola Slee about the misrepresentation of Mary Magdalene, expressing that anger and reclaiming Mary's true character and worth. Nicola Slee is a feminist theologian; she writes with no holds barred; her language breaks out of conventional inhibitions. I will read some extracts, You can find the whole poem in Nicola Slee's book 'Praying like a Woman'.

The title is '**Mary Magdalene; a liturgy of denunciation and reclamation**'.

A chorus resonates repeatedly through the poem:

We denounce the lies

We renounce the myths,

We reclaim your story anew.

The poem starts:

*Magdalene; we are angered by the lies
They have told about you;
Magdalene, we are angered by the truths
They have concealed about you;
Magdalene, we are angered by the power
They have robbed from you;
We claim our anger,
We vent our anger
We choose to use our anger
To denounce; to renounce; to reclaim.*

*We denounce the hateful names they called you;
Prostitute; whore; harlot...
We renounce the pernicious images they painted of you;*

Voluptuous, sensuous, curvaceous...

*They painted you grovelling at the feet of Jesus
Never tall and upright, meeting him face to face...*

*We see you speechless and silent
You! The one who proclaimed the resurrection! ...*

*Even in the garden you seem always to be kneeling,
Stooping and gesturing towards the Lord's body...*

***We denounce the lies
We renounce the myths,
We reclaim your story anew.***

We reclaim the names with which they should have honoured you:

Woman of noble stature

Woman of upright life

Woman of bold countenance and bearing

Woman of means, woman of substance,

Providing out of your largesse for Jesus and his companions.

Magdalene, we honour you.

Healed woman,

woman released from oppressive forces,

woman set free of all that would imprison or limit ...

Free woman, refusing to be contained

by the strictures of men

or the bondages of patriarchy...

Magdalene, we salute you.

Woman with a mission, commissioned by Jesus to go forth and tell.

Woman of the strong voice, the powerful witness, the acknowledged authority.

Woman of courage, woman of boldness, woman of purpose,

whose voice unleashed the Easter story.

Magdalene, we revere you.

We stand tall in the shadow of your stature,

We speak boldly with the courage of your voice,

We claim our power in the tradition of your own.

We denounce the lies

We renounce the myths

We reclaim your story anew.