



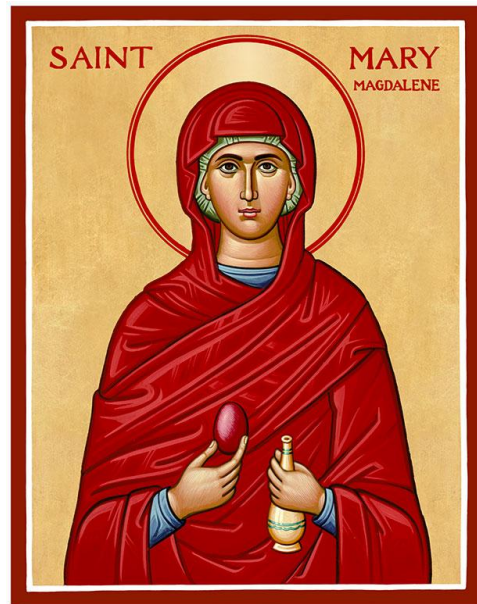
Giving Thanks For Mary Magdalene This Eastertide

April 21, 2019

Dear Friends in Christ,

Early Sunday morning, when Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb of Jesus and found it empty, she did not think it was good news. She assumed the body had been taken away— why or by whom, she did not know. She ran to find Peter and John, who noticed the grave clothes had been folded neatly and put aside. They came but proved to be of no help. She stayed by the tomb and wept.

The account in the Gospel of John leaves us for several verses in the midst of Mary's grief, but even as Mary wept, her world began to change. She met angels. She met a stranger who asked her, "Whom do you seek?" The stranger spoke her name, and she saw that he was Jesus, her risen Lord. As she ran to tell the others, she knew it was not only Jesus who had been transformed. Mary knew that she had left behind all that burdened her, all her grief and her fear. She announced to her friends: *I have seen the Lord*. She was a new soul in a new world.



That new world is still with us: we may find it hard to believe, on days when churches burn, or children die. Even if we believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ with all our heart, so much of us still thinks and behaves as though we lived only in the old world, the world of sin and death.

But in the Resurrection God declares that the old world is done for, finished, nailed to the Cross. The principalities and powers have been disarmed. We have been delivered from the Kingdom of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son. (Col. 1:13) The only question is, how shall we live, now that we know this to be true?

Can we begin to give up our pet sins, whatever they may be— whether pride or rage, envy or despair, or anything else in the whole sorry catalog of human error? Can we pray to see them changed into their opposites— humility and joy, love and hope? Can we by the grace of God take hold of even a few of the patches of darkness in our souls, roll them up and leave them, like empty grave clothes, at the tomb of Christ? Of course some

will come back, but even to resolve such a thing, to begin to think and pray in this way, is to take a step through the doorway, into Mary's world, the world where we truly belong.

After Mary Magdalene witnessed to her brothers and sisters that Christ was risen, she evidently kept witnessing. There are wonderful stories about her— how she traveled to France, proclaimed the Gospel there, saved a village from a river-monster, how she healed the sick, blessed children, prayed for the world in her mountain hermitage. You may or may not believe them, as you wish. But what cannot be denied is how she was changed, from a woman oppressed by demons, into an apostle of joy, a messenger of Christ's Cross and Resurrection.

So, let us give thanks for Mary Magdalene this Eastertide. All that God has done for her, God can surely do for us. Begin by asking this: Now that Christ has been raised and the new world has come, now that your sins are forgiven and your wounds are being healed, who are you? Who will you be?

Faithfully your bishop,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dorsey', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

(The Right Reverend) Dorsey W.M. McConnell, D.D.
VIII Bishop of Pittsburgh

