

WOMEN of VISION



Catholic Information Center ~ Grand Rapids

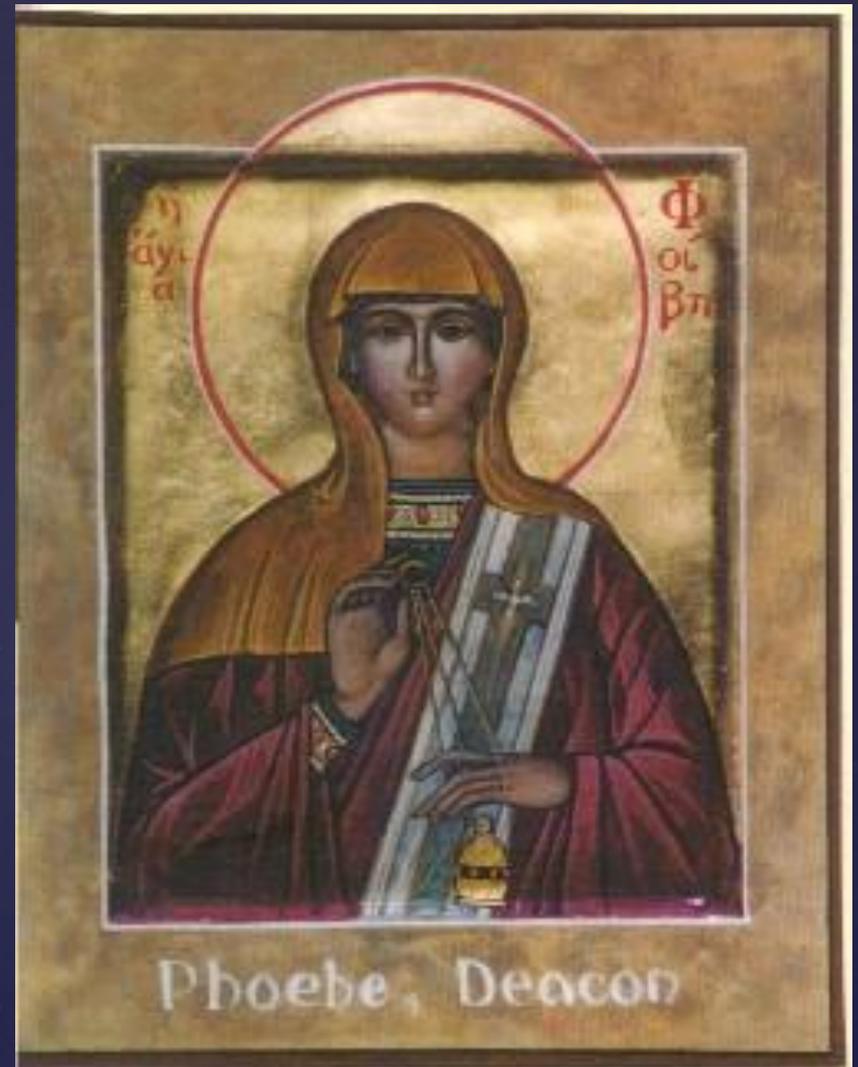
Sept. 3, 2025

Barbara E. Reid, OP ~ Catholic Theological Union www.ctu.edu

Phoebe Deacon of Cenchreae

Rom 16:1

Qualifications: 1 Tim 3:8-13



Phoebe

❖ *Prostatis* – Rom 16:2

❖ “helper” (*RSV*)

❖ “good friend” (*NEB*)

❖ “a great help” (*NIV*)

❖ “benefactor” (*NRSV, NAB*)

Diakonein (v.) / *Diakonia* (n.)

- ❖ Jesus' mission (Mark 10:45 and pars.)
- ❖ Leadership (Luke 22:25-27)
- ❖ Apostolic ministry (Acts 1:25)
- ❖ Ministry of the table (Acts 6:2)
- ❖ Ministry of the word (Acts 6:4)
- ❖ Financial ministry (Luke 8:3; Acts 11:29; 12:25)
- ❖ Whole of Paul's mission (Acts 20:24; 21:19)
- ❖ Qualifications: 1 Tim 3:8-13

Prostatis

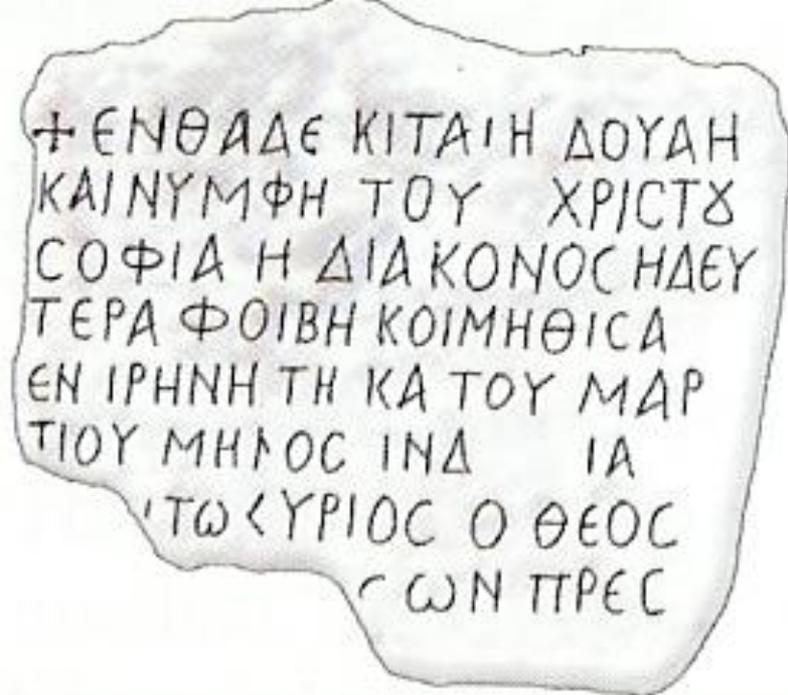
- ❖ Greek literature:
- ❖ Political leadership = “leader,” “ruler”
- ❖ Roman period: “patron”
= provide funds, protection, political influence
- ❖ “...For she has become a leader /presider of many, and of myself as well”



Pisidian
Antioch

Perga

Plancia Magna



† ἐνθάδε κίται ἡ δούλη
καὶ νύμφη τοῦ Χριστοῦ
Σοφία, ἡ διάκονος, ἡ δευ
τέρα φοῖβη κοιμηθῆσα
ἐν ἰρήνῃ τῇ κα' τοῦ Μαρ
τίου μηνὸς Ἰνδ [ἰκτιῶνος] ια'
..... θίτω κύριος ὁ θεὸς
..... ἰτων πρεσ...

Sofia the deacon, the sec-
ond Phoebe. She fell asleep
in peace on the 21st of the month of Mar-
ch indiction 11

.....the Lord God

....pres

Tombstone Found 1903
on Mount of Olives from C4

Coworkers in the Pauline churches:

- ❖ Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa,
Persis (Rom 16:6, 12)
- ❖ Euodia & Syntyche
(Phil 4:2-4)

11 of 30 whom Paul greets in Romans 16 are women

Heads of House Churches:

- ❖ Nympha (Col 4:14)
- ❖ Phoebe (Rom 16:1)
- ❖ Prisca (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5)
- ❖ Lydia (Acts 16:40)
- ❖ Mary (Acts 12:12)
- ❖ Chloe (1 Cor 1:11) - possibly



Prisca & Aquila

- & Coworkers of Paul (Rom 16:3)
- & Leaders of House Church (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19)
- & Apostles (Acts 18:18)
- & Teachers (Acts 18:26)

Andronicus & Junia

“notable among the
apostles”
(Rom 16:7)



Apostle:

Apostolos = “one sent”



Paul

Rom 1:1

1 Cor 9:1-27

& Apollos

(1 Cor 4:9)



Barnabas

1 Cor 9:5-6

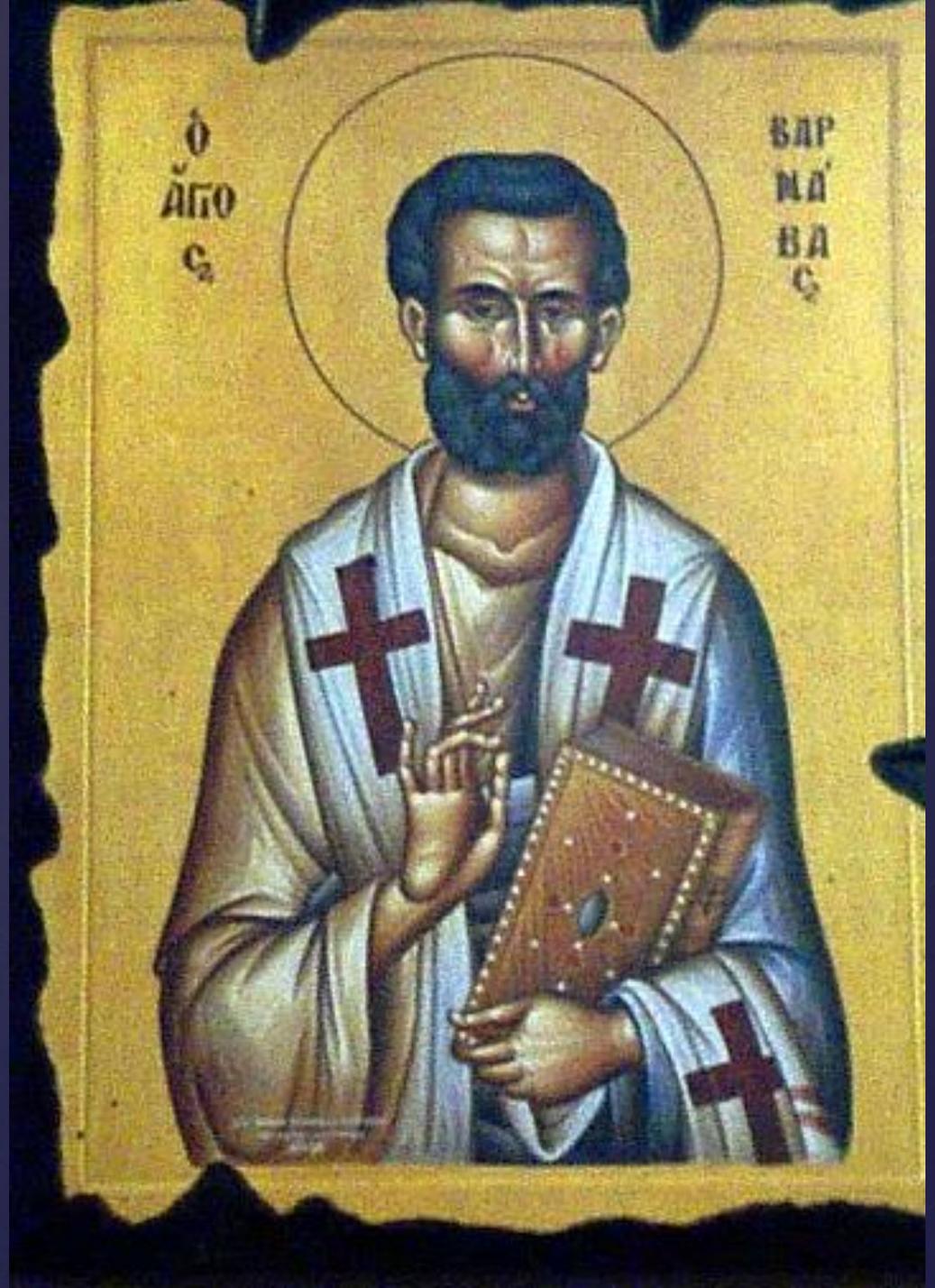
Acts 14:4, 14

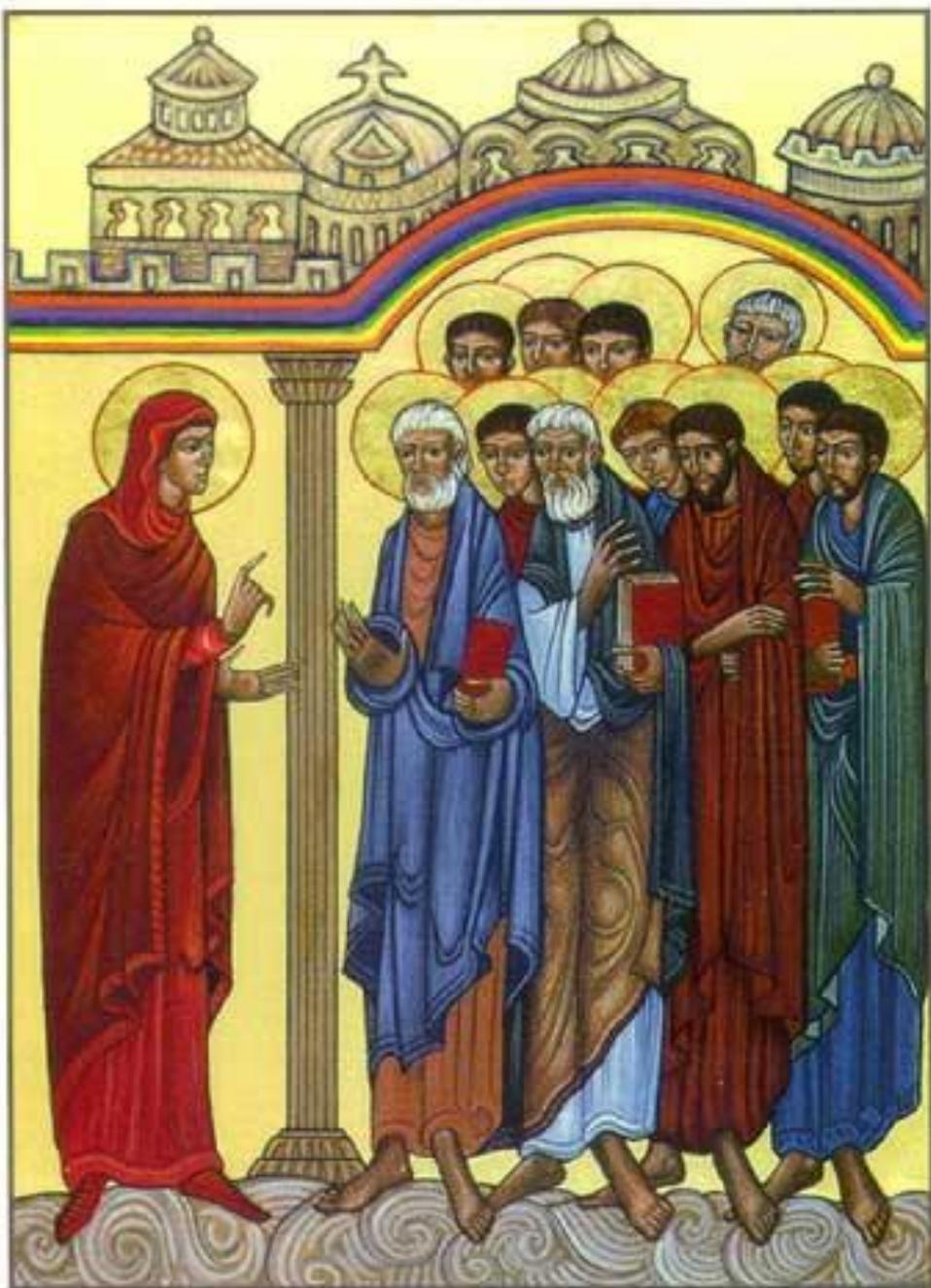
Epaphroditus

Phil 2:25

Silvanus & Timothy

1 Thess 2:7 + 1:1





Mary Magdalene “Apostle to the Apostles”

Mary so called
at least as early as Hippolytus
(C3 Rome)

See especially
John 20:1-18





Titian, Penitent Magdalene (1565)



Luke 7:36-50

Woman who anoints Jesus Mark 14:3-9



He Qi



Mary of Bethany (John 12:1-11)

Woman Caught in Adultery – John 8:1-11





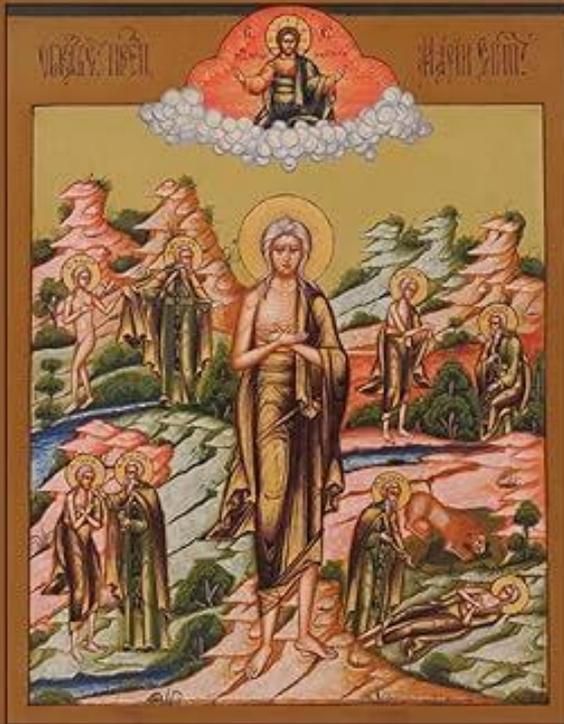
Pope Gregory the Great



Quentin Metsys (1466-1530)
Penitent Mary Magdalen (left) and ***Penitent Mary of Egypt*** (right)
(Philadelphia, Museum of Fine Art, John G. Johnson Collection)

SAINT MARY OF EGYPT

A MODERN VERSE LIFE
AND INTERPRETATION

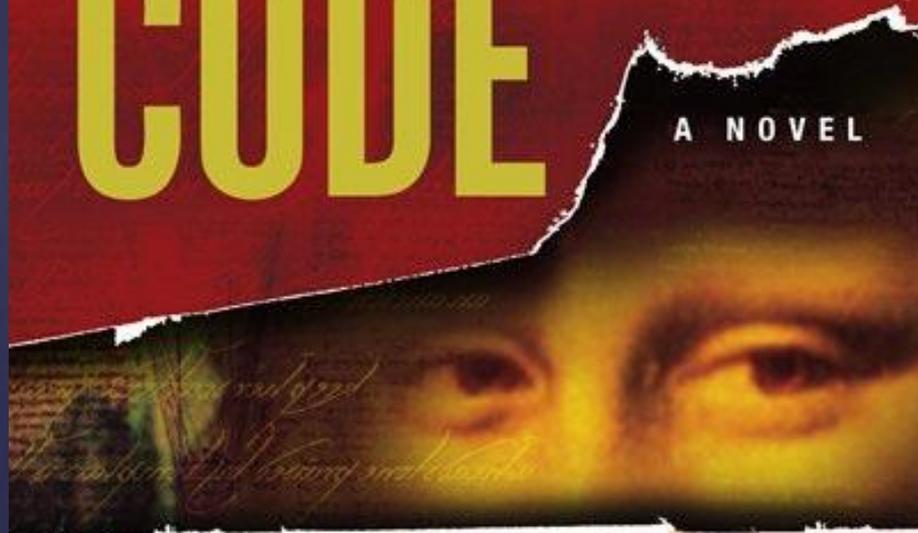


BONNIE B. THURSTON
FOREWORD BY BENEDICTA WARD, SLG



THE
**DA VINCI
CODE**

A NOVEL



DAN BROWN

AUTHOR OF ANGELS AND DEMONS



Procession at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer

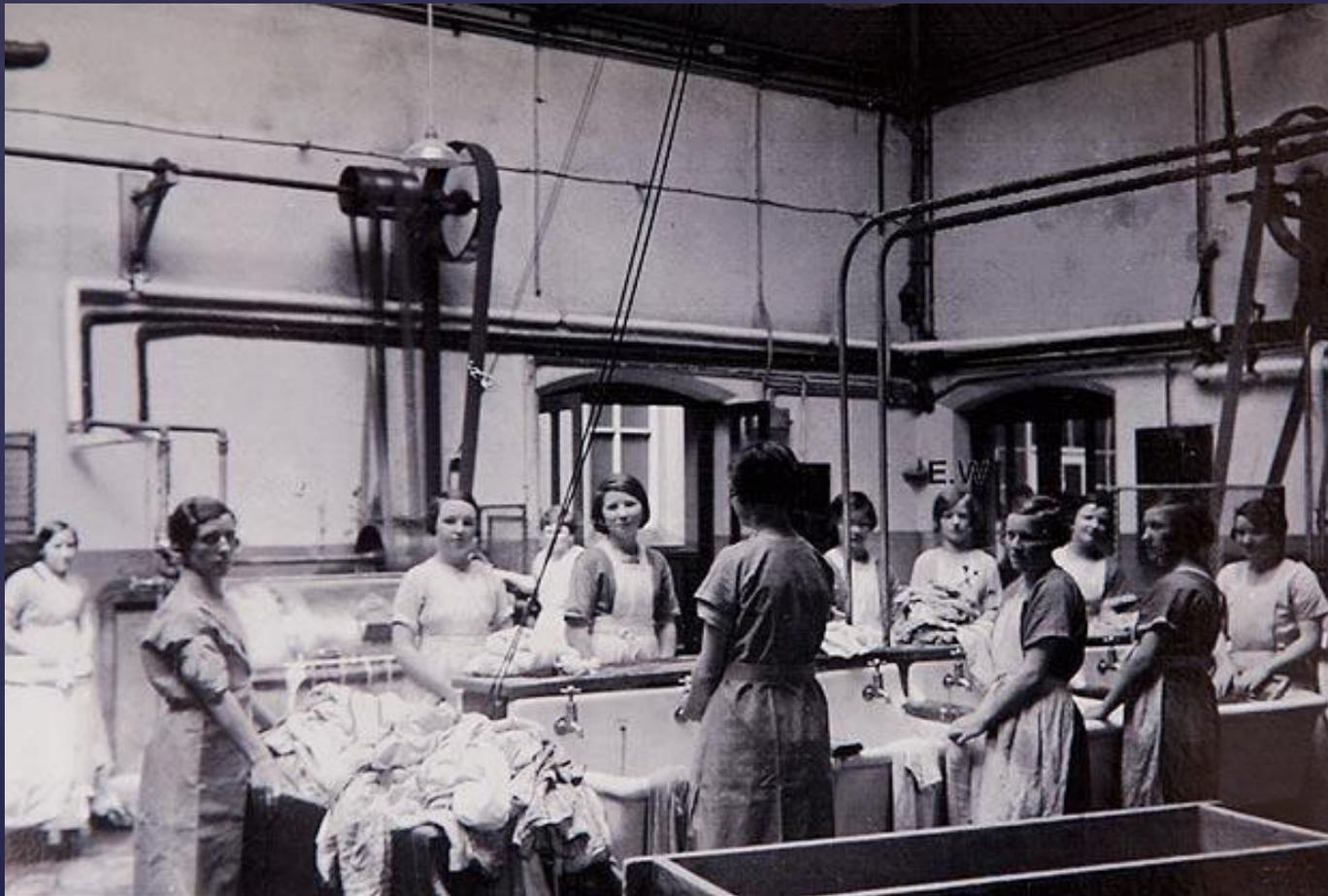


Mary Magdalene's grotto
St. Baume



Mary Magdalene's final resting place?

Magdalene Laundries/ Magdalene Asylums
~ Ireland 18th-19th Centuries

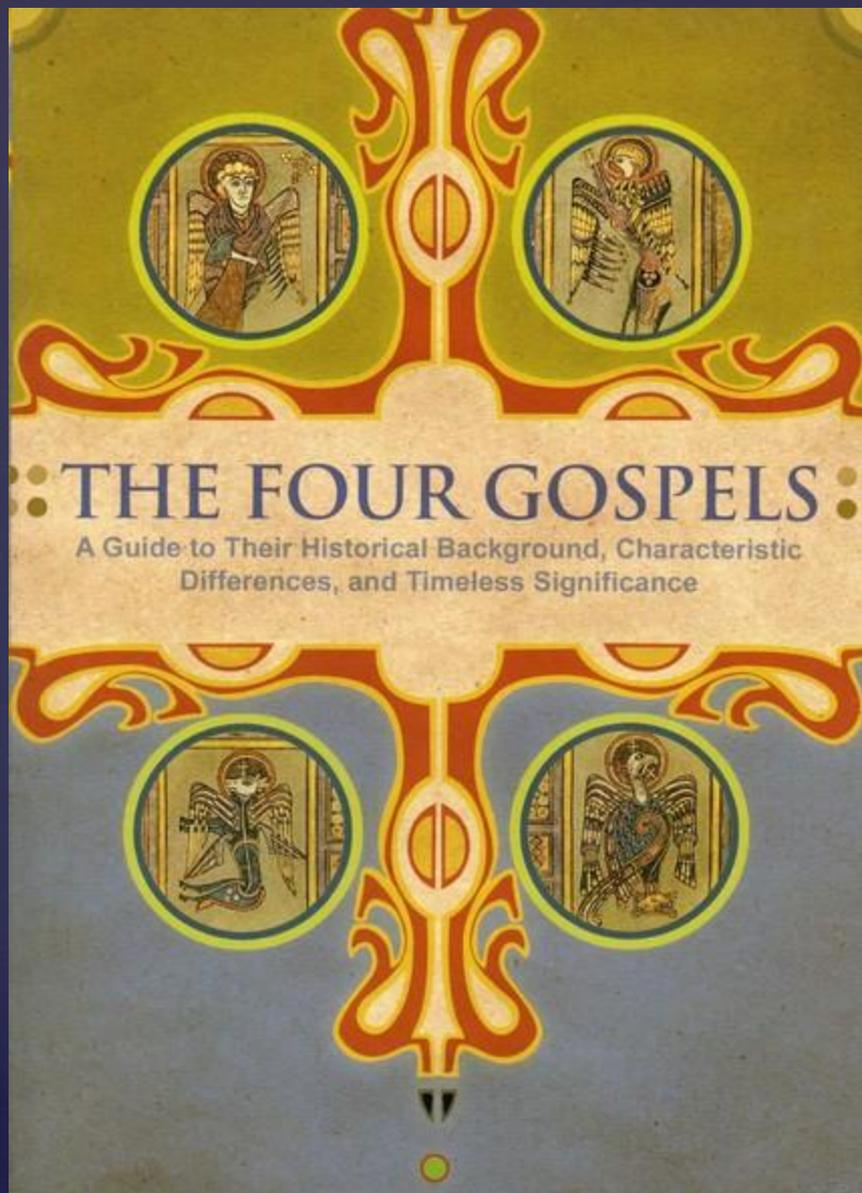


MAGDALENE HOUSE CHICAGO



Magdalene House Chicago, Inc. (MHC) is a home and enterprise for positive, personal change for women survivors of sex trafficking, prostitution, and addiction in the Chicagoland area.



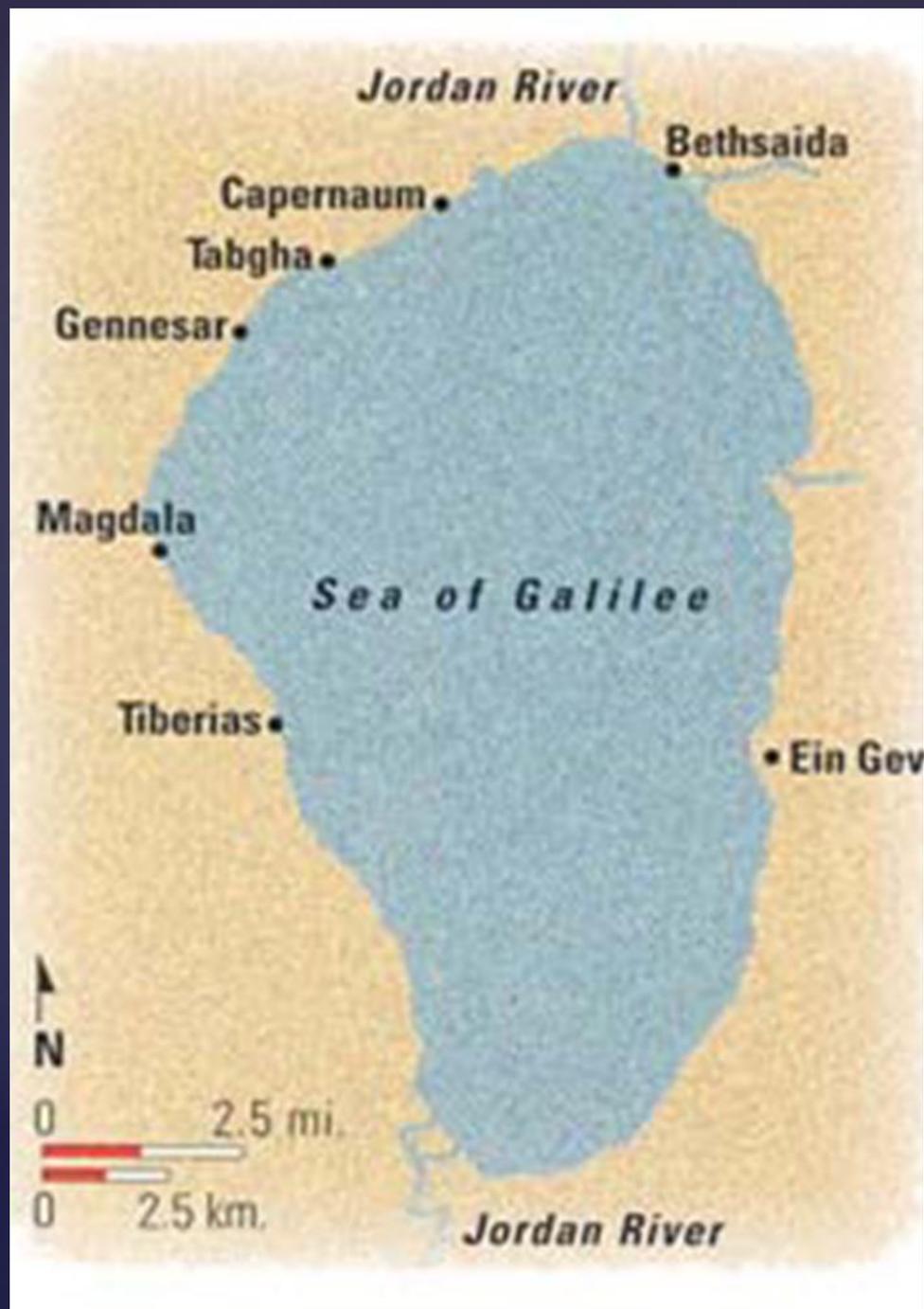


Mary Magdalene in the Gospels



Mary Magdalene
with Joanna and
Susanna (Luke 8:1-3)

Janet McKenzie









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Excavations
1971-1977 by
Franciscans



The One Sent:
Mary Magdalene with
Jesus, the Christ

--Janet McKenzie

“Towering Mary”

Hē magalēnē

= from Magdala

- but the town was
called Tarichaea in C1,
not Magdala

= “towering,” “great,”
“magnificent” for her faith
and ministry (so Origen,
Eusebuis of Caesarea,
Jerome)



Mary Magdalene Tower
Budapest – C13



Mary Magdalene with Joanna and Susanna (Luke 8:1-3)

- *diēnonoun*, “diaconating”
- “out of their resources
(*hyparchontōn*)
= monetary resources
- *autais*, “their,” = feminine plural possessive pronoun, indicating that the money is their own, not the common purse (John’s Gospel [12:6] says that Judas “kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it”).

Janet McKenzie



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Four Different Versions

Mk 16:1-8

Mt 28:1-10

Lk 24:1-11

Jn 20:1-18









Fra Angelico,
*Women at the
Empty Tomb*

Fra Angelico, *Women at the Empty Tomb*



“So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement (***tromos kai ekstasis***) had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid (*ephobounto*).”
(Mark 16:8)

(Mark 16:8)

tromos kai ekstasis

Trembling with awe
and ecstasis

Mary Southard, CSJ



In the beginning (Gen 1:1) . . . The beginning of the good news (Mark 1:1; 16:8)



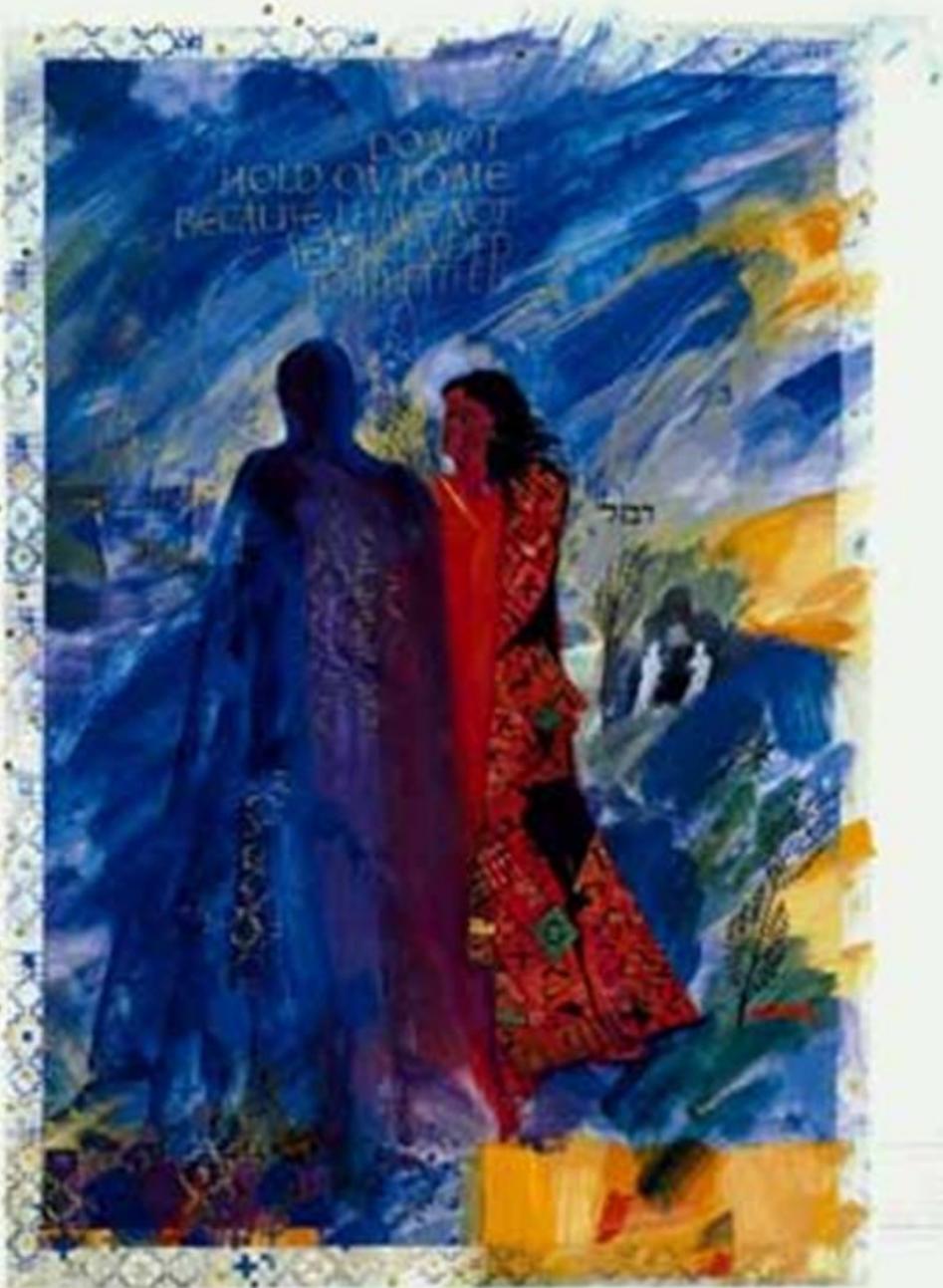
P.S.

The Shorter Ending

The Longer Ending

- 16:9-11 Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene
- 16:12-13 Jesus Appears to Two Disciples
- 16:14-18 Jesus Commissions the Disciples
- 16:19-20 The Ascension of Jesus

Matt 28:1-10



*The Resurrection,
St. John's Bible*



“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. **Remember** how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”

Then **they remembered** his words, and returning from the tomb, they **told** all this to the eleven and to all the rest.

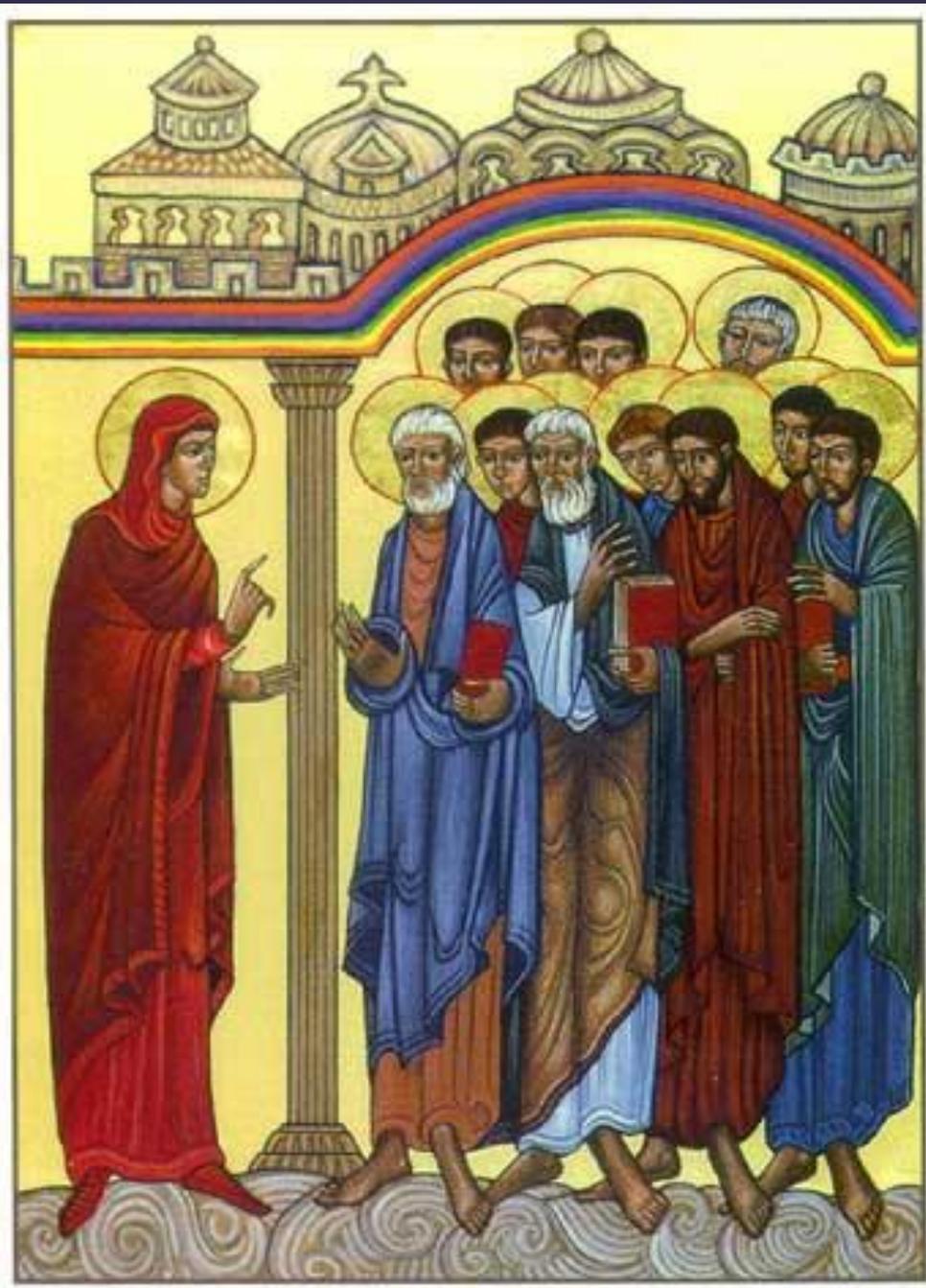


“This is my
body given for
you”

“Do this in
Remembrance
of me”

(Luke 22:14-23)

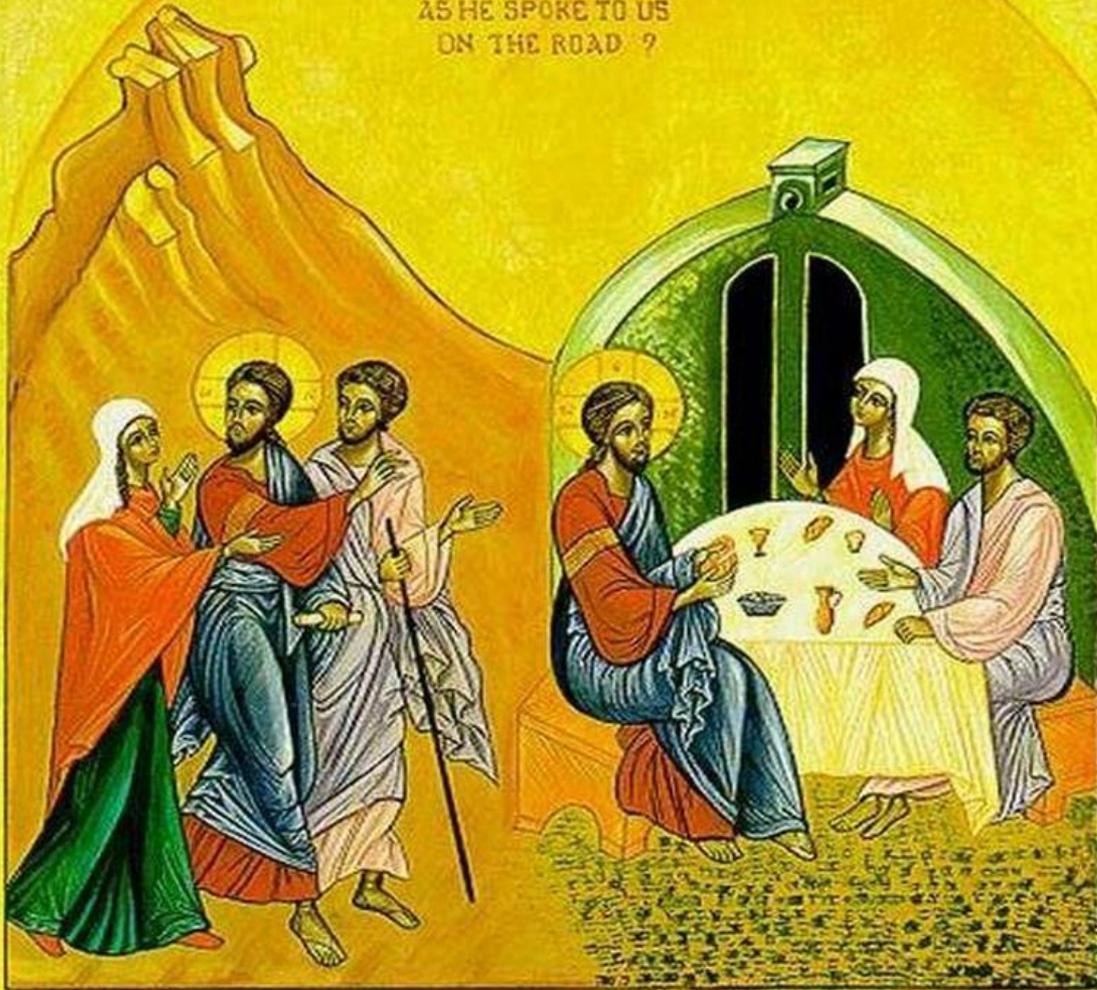
- Not a one-time act
- Not to atone for sins
- A life-long surrender in service to the least - manifest in acts of healing & forgiveness
- “Remember” – make present his words & actions



Now it was Mary Magdalene,
Joanna, Mary the mother of
James, and the other women
with them who told (*elegon*)
this to the apostles.

(Luke 24:10)

WERE NOT OUR HEARTS
GRADUALLY CATCHING FIRE
WITHIN US
AS HE SPOKE TO US
ON THE ROAD ?



“Some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.”
(24:22-24).

Sr. Marie-Paul Farran, OSB, *Road to Emmaus*

First to See the Risen Christ

Two Strands of Tradition

Mary Magdalene

- Matt 28:1-10
- John 20:1-18
- Mark 16:9
- Gospel of Mary

Peter

- 1 Cor 15:3-11
- Luke 24:1-12



John 20:1-18

& “We do not
know
Where they
have laid
him” (v. 2)
[Representat
ive
Character]



Answer in 2 parts:

vv. 3-10 Jesus has returned to the Father, to repossess the glory he had before (17:5)



vv. 11-18 Jesus, glorified
in God, has also
returned to his own
(14:28)



“to [earthly]
me do not
cling”
(v. 17)

Holy Sepulchre
Chapel of Mary Magdalene
Jerusalem



One Sacred Community – Mary Southard, CSJ

“Go to my brothers and sisters [*adelphoi*]”

I have
seen
the
Lord!

(+ 20:25
disciples to
Thomas)



Lucy D'Souza



"Apostle to the Apostles"
– Janet McKenzie



Feastday
July 22

Pope Francis

“the presence of women must be guaranteed in . . . the various settings where important decisions are made, both in the Church and in social structures.”
(*Evangelii Gaudium* par. 103)





Aug. 2, 2016

Pope Francis creates commission (6 women, 6 men) to study the diaconate for women

Nov. 1, 2016

Women Roman Catholic priests: "not ever likely"

"Saint Pope John Paul II had the last clear word on this and it stands, this stands"

5.7.19 Pope Francis said, "There were deaconesses at the beginning [of the church], but [the question is] was theirs a sacramental ordination or not?"

Phyllis Zagano: women served as deacons in Europe for about a millennium in a variety of ministerial and sacramental roles. "They anointed ill women; they brought communion to ill women. . . . There was ordination.... The most interesting evidence is the fact that the ordination ceremonies [we discovered] for women deacons were identical to the ordination ceremonies for men."

Amazonian Synod Oct. 2019

- Two-thirds of the communities in the Amazon are “coordinated and directed by women
- Bishop Erwin Kräutler of Xingu, Brazil: “many of the bishops are in favor of the ordination of female deacons.” [vote to re-examine female deacons passed 137 in favor and 30 opposed]
- 10.26.19 Pope Francis announced he will be summoning his commission on the issue back to work, and adding new members to its ranks.
- when pressed as to whether the synod would lead to ordaining women as priests, Bishop Kräutler said, “No.”
- He added, however, that the synod “may be a step” in that direction.



⌘ Second Commission established April 2020 – focused more on the ministry of the diaconate rather than the theology and history. - no results published

⌘ October 2024 – final synod assembly document: “women must be given all the opportunities that Church law provides to act as leaders”; possibility of ordination of women deacons left an open question that needs further reflection.

⌘ Study group due to report December 31, 2025.





& Sr. Simona Brambilla
& First woman to lead a
Vatican Dicastery

Photo: CNS

For Reflection:



- What do the stories of Phoebe and of Mary Magdalene say to you?
- How does it give you hope?
- What do they inspire you to do?