



Women's Ordination Conference  
PO Box 15057  
Washington, DC 20003

July 30, 2025

To His Holiness, Pope Leo XIV,

We send you warm greetings as your sisters in Christ in the spirit of the recent feast of St. Mary Magdalene, Apostle to the Apostles. As faithful Catholics, we watched your election and the start of your papacy with great joy and hope, buoyed by your words of peace and bridge-building.

We write to you from the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC), the oldest and largest organization advocating for the ordination of women as deacons, priests, and bishops in the Roman Catholic Church. We know you are a person of deep listening and discernment, and we hope and pray that you read this letter, and the attached messages, with those qualities at the forefront.

The feast of St. Mary Magdalene is significant to all faithful Catholics, including and especially to those of us in the movement to open ordination to women in the church. She is, as St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, the "Apostle to the Apostles," the first to witness the risen Christ and the first to preach the Good News of the Resurrection. Beyond that, she was a trusted friend and follower of Jesus, a figure important enough to be recorded in all four Gospels by name.

We at WOC walk in her lineage and the lineage of all of the women disciples and saints who ministered from the first days of the church onward. We are beloved disciples, bearers of the Good News, preachers of the Resurrection. We are the descendants of Mary Magdalene, Apostle to the Apostles. And we are called, by God and by her example, to equality in all ministries in the church.

Since you just celebrated this feast day for the first time as Pope, we want to take the time to introduce you to the people who are “descendants of Mary Magdalene” so you can hear their stories. We wish you could sit down personally with each of them and hear the truth of the calling they have received from God, as true and valid as that of any male priest who discerns his vocation. They are faithful servants of the church, evangelizers, theologically trained and spiritually devout. They are not seeking power or “clericalization”—they seek to fulfill their calling to serve as ordained ministers.

In the spirit of synodality and dialogue, we would like to share with you the messages they have written to you about what it means to be a descendant of Mary Magdalene. She is invoked repeatedly in the synod documents when discussing the calls for greater equality between men and women in the church. She is, as then-Archbishop Arthur Roche wrote in the decree announcing the elevation of her feast day, *“an example and model for every woman in the church.”* As we celebrate the apostle to the apostles, whom Jesus entrusted with the precious news of the Resurrection, may we be attuned to how Jesus calls and entrusts women with similarly precious ministries today.

We pray that you may receive this with the same spirit of openness and vulnerability with which it is shared. We humbly request the opportunity to meet with you in a private audience to discuss this further and share more stories of women sincerely called to ordained ministry. Please contact us via email at [woc@womensordination.org](mailto:woc@womensordination.org) or by phone at +39 393 692 2100.

Please know that we have you in our prayers as you shoulder the responsibility and gift of the papacy in this complex time in our church and world.

Your sisters in Christ,

Kate McElwee, Executive Director  
Katie Lacz, Program Director

Cc  
General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops  
Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith

*Holy Father,*

**We are the descendants of the  
Apostle to the Apostles**



*Mary Magdalene*



*I am new to the Catholic Church. What stopped me from becoming Catholic for a long time is the inequality of women in the church. It is not what Jesus taught by example, and we have women who are venerated as saints. So I do not understand why women cannot also serve God as priests. It's important to make sure that traditional teachings aren't keeping in tradition with the Pharisees rather than God's ways, which are different than man's ways. I implore the church to allow women to serve in leadership roles as Christ was not bigoted toward women, neither should the Catholic Church be. I understand that early Christianity kept to many old traditions from the Old Testament, but new wine skins for new wine means making space for those called to serve God in any capacity God chooses.*

— TP, United States

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*Mary Magdalene was a disciple of Jesus the Christ.  
She is Sophia. This is the year, women will rise as never  
before. Bless you for your care & support as we rise.*

— KM, Diocese of Santa Fe, USA

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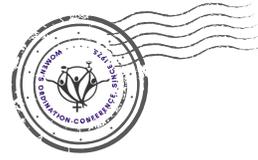


*She inspires me as witness to those who thirst for a kind,  
just and all-loving God in their lives by the flames of  
infinite, unconditional and ineffable love.*

— GP, Archdiocese of Atlanta, USA

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*Everyone is invited to the table, everyone!*

— KC, Corona, CA, USA

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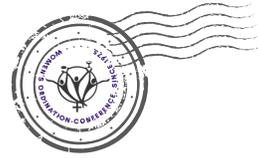


*When I returned to God a few years ago, Mary Magdalene and her close relationship to Christ impressed me. For me, being a descendant of Mary Magdalene means being inspired by and relating to her. Sometimes, her story is told in a way that depicts her as a prostitute and the demons that are expelled from her body stand for sin. I find this iteration of her story highly questionable. In other iterations, the expelling means healing, of illness, potentially both psychological and physical. I struggle with depression and OCD, as well as another chronic illness that primarily occurs in women. Mary Magdalene was able to find comfort in Christ, and like her, I'm able to find it too. A few months ago, I was in a really dark place and I went to Church to journal (I wrote a letter to St. Joan of Arc) and just walked around, crying, trying to calm down. I think I lit a candle. It helped. Being a descendant of Mary Magdalene means an opportunity for healing.*

— LV, Osnabruck, Germany

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*I'm inspired by her and her female companions every day. Jesus chose her to go break the good news of his resurrection to the rest of his followers. He entrusted her with such a pivotal task in those early days after his resurrection, indicating clearly that gender is not a barrier to being called to serve in a variety of roles and ministries (including those that require ordination) to build up the kingdom of God.*

*It wasn't a problem for Jesus.  
It's only a problem for the Church as Institution.*

— MD, Lancaster Diocese, UK

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*From gospel readings there were many women, many behind the scenes, who provided for Jesus and the apostles in the early church. Women were totally supportive of Christ's ministry and never left Him even when frightened for their own safety. Jesus treated these women as equals in God's eyes as we all are. We are faithful, many daily Mass goers, drawn as Mary was to Jesus, and to His presence in the Eucharist.*

— PS, Albany Diocese, USA

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*Jesus chose her to announce the resurrection. I am so tired of those with privilege in the Church telling those excluded why it is right for them to be excluded.*

*— BB, Diocese of New Orleans, USA*

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*As an ecclesial descendant of the Apostle to the Apostles, I feel called to remind the male clergy that in the earliest and early church, women shared roles now denied them.*

*— JV, San Diego, CA, USA*

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*Dear Holy Father,*

*To be a descendant of Mary Magdalene means to be a faithful queer Christian Catholic woman of trans experience. Mary Magdalene inspires my faith as she was one of the first to preach the gospel, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And I wish for the Church and Magisterium to follow in her in her preaching of the resurrection. And to do so by renewing the Church into fully affirming and accepting LGBTQ+ people, and women clergy.*

*— VA, Archdiocese of Seattle, USA*

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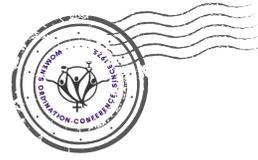


*I love Jesus with my whole heart, mind and being. I ministered in the Catholic Church in 2 parishes for 30 years. I loved my vocation more than I can describe. However I have often seen priests who don't have all the charisms necessary to be good Pastors. Nothing against them, but there must be a way to identify their strengths and use them where God intended. Because of the lack of priests I have been unable to receive anointing of the sick while in the hospital. Why can't women do at least some of the priest's roles? I suggest as a start anointing, baptisms, and marriages.*

*— MF, Diocese of Oakland, USA*

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*Women's history calls out today for them to be  
deacons and priests.*

*— TC, Archdiocese of Minneapolis/St. Paul, USA*

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*To be a descendant of Mary Magdalene means that I am loved deeply by Jesus. I am truly seen with the compassionate eyes of Jesus, just as he saw Mary Magdalene. Jesus chose Mary to be the first witness of his resurrection and he spoke her name, yet the other disciples did not believe her. I am losing hope for equality in the church because the patriarchal Church still refuses to listen to women's voices (in the 21st century!!) and even on Easter, we do not hear the story of M.M. Women's stories from the Scriptures are not proclaimed at Mass in the Sunday gospels. The many courageous and inspiring stories of women in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the New Testament have been erased from the Sunday liturgies. We only hear about a masculine God and "His" men followers. Where are the WOMEN??*

*— MC, Monterey Diocese, USA*

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*She was close to Jesus and she stayed close to  
him like the apostles.*

*— DF, Torino, Italy*

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*She is called the Apostle to the Apostle and we know she was a  
disciple of Jesus. We are all called to be His disciples. If Mary  
Magdalene was called by Jesus, I believe that everyone called to  
discipleship needs to be recognized and give an opportunity to  
service in all positions. This should include priesthood, if that is  
their call. In Christ there is no male or female.*

*— BW, Archdiocese of Chicago, USA*

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*Respectful and real equality and equity by, for and  
with womyn in the Church and the church.*

— JP, Diocese of San Jose, USA

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*Steadfast, unwavering devotion to the Lord. A woman of  
courage. She and so many contemporary women convince  
me that women must become priests. I pray, Holy Father,  
that you have the courage to be decisive.*

— JB, Monterey Diocese, USA

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*First to see Jesus after His Resurrection. Told the good news to the Apostles. I need to follow in her steps.*

— MB, Archdiocese of Baltimore, USA

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*She was always treated as equal to men. I thought Vatican II would have ordained women! All the terrible treatment of children by priests since would never been tolerated! At least stop celibacy.*

— RW, Archdiocese of Chicago, USA

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*If it was good enough for Jesus to have a woman (Mary Magdalene) tell the good news of salvation, it should be good enough for the church that claims to follow Him.*

— SP, Diocese of Rockville Centre, USA

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*Mary Magdalene was chosen by God to be the bearer of the news of the resurrection to the other followers of Jesus. He preached a message of love, and love is recognizing all as equal. Paul said it clearly in his letter to the Galatians. It is time to put this message in practice in the church. All vocations are open to women in society, so should the vocation of the priesthood.*

— FC, Archdiocese of Miami, USA

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*Women and children had no status during Jesus' time. In the feeding of the 5000, they did not even count the women and children, only the men. Yet Jesus had women disciples who supported his ministry, traveled with him and welcomed him to their homes.*

*Mary, Magdalene traveled with Jesus, participated fully in his ministry. In her faithfulness, she was the first person to encounter the resurrected Jesus and was entrusted with the message to tell the others that 'he has risen'.*

*I pray every day to have the courage and faithfulness of Mary Magdalene. She may not have been given the official title of 'apostle' by the early church because of patriarchy and the non-status of women during those days. But time has proven that women are at par with men in mind, Spirit and being. By denying women's voices, viewpoints and worldviews, the church is that much impoverished.*

*I hope that the Holy Spirit may inspire more discussion, discernment, and true and full synodality, so that the equality of women may finally be realized.*

*— MT, MD, Diocese of Toledo, USA*  
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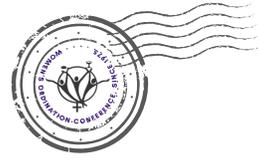


*She ministered to Jesus and no doubt understood his mission more than anyone else. She received the privilege of seeing him alive at the tomb, and to proclaim to the apostles "I have seen the Lord". He gave her this mandate even if she was a woman. So must the Church do the same.*

*— MF, Concord, CA, USA*

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*Mary Magdalene was one of Jesus' closest confidantes and was highly esteemed in the early church. Jesus was not clerical or sexist. What mattered to him was how a person acted and what was in their heart. I am disappointed that the Church, over the centuries, has diluted women's voices and excluded them from ministry. Your messages on peace and poverty are wonderful, but are diminished by deep inequality in the institutional church regarding women.*

— BM, United States

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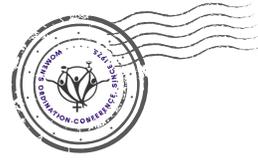


*As a descendant of Mary Magdalene, I share the trauma (with all women in the Church) of being marginalized, vilified, silenced, persecuted, ridiculed and shamed by the powerful leaders of the Church. Mary Magdalene had God-Given authority to be the Apostle to the Apostles. Mere men took that away, created a story to discredit her, and upheld that scandalous story until quite recently. Mary Magdalene inspires me to stay in the Church and work to help create a Church more in align with what Jesus himself modeled. Modeling Jesus' behavior is the way to proclaim the Gospel. Reliance on Rules, Laws and Traditions is a scandal in itself, when the behavior of Jesus is not practiced. We are equal before God, equal through Baptism, equal as sinners-in-training-to-be-Saints. The tragedy of a Church that does not recognize that equality and practice it, is a sin against the Spirit of God, Who is Love.*

— EF, Archdiocese of Denver, USA

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*I emulate Her humility. And as a transwoman, I am heartbroken that my Church will not acknowledge me as the Woman that I am.*

*— AR, Petawawa, Ontario, Canada*

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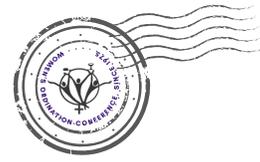


*In all 4 gospels, Mary Magdalene is the one that Jesus reveals his resurrection to first. She was chosen to carry that message to everyone.. To me this validates that of course God values both men and women as leaders/teachers who can bring others closer to God. That the Catholic Church does not allow women to be leaders seems to be in direct opposition to what God wants as far as I understand. It's flat out oppression. Jesus stands by the oppressed. I hope someday the Catholic Church can figure this out.*

*— ED*

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*Holy Sister Magdalene, first witness of the Resurrection,  
keep us beneath your Mantle and lead us to Christ.*

*— AB, San Gabriel, CA, USA*

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*As a child I was told that I could not be ordained because I was  
a girl and God only chose boys. I knew in my soul that was not  
true. Mary Magdalene showed me that I was called to serve  
God by the gifts he gave me as female. Jesus was clear in his  
call to Mary and in her equal role to the male Apostles. He  
gives that same call to me and ALL of my sisters.*

*— SB, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, USA*

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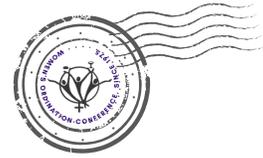




*As the first person chosen by Jesus to announce the resurrection Mary Magdalene gives me hope that women will no longer be limited by the church.*

— MM, Ireland

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*Mary Magdalene was the first successor of the apostles and clearly signals that apostolic succession is not necessarily patriarchal.*

— LG, Washington, USA

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Mary Magdalene's relationship with Jesus is referenced in scripture and is the subject of extensive theological research. For me, this fact documents her discipleship as a foundational pillar in the early Christian organization. She was recognized among her peers as an equal and an authority. She held a place of leadership and guidance following Jesus's death and resurrection. Her insights and interpretations on the living Christ gives me courage to see all of creation in a new way including my place and purpose.



I've experienced a kind of "knowing" inside of me that comes from the Presence within me. It is a Presence that I recognize in others. And it has no man made boundaries. It is the Risen Christ. Mary Magdalene, I believe, recognized this as well. She shared a deeply feminine personal relationship with Jesus before he was killed which, I think, allowed her to right away recognize Jesus the Christ resurrected.

Mary Magdalene's example is a beacon that encourages me to experience the Kingdom of God within me and recognize the spirit filled good works in others. Living Faith means trusting and leaping when we recognize/experience the invitation. I was raised Catholic. Catholic grade school. Catholic University. I am so grateful for the nuns who taught me. But most relevant is the intelligence, faith, strength, insight and common sense, those women possessed. I believe their example helped me recognize my inner strength and spiritual center.

Our Creator is both feminine and masculine. The Aramaic translation for the Lords Prayer starts out... "O cosmic birther of all radiance and vibration..." which is not the same as "Our Father, who art in heaven..." Mary Magdalene's place in the early Christian tradition, exemplifies that God is bigger than gender based religion.

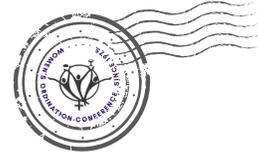
Dear Pope Leo, My wish for you is to hear the invitation. Shepherd inclusively. Hear the feminine voice of our Creator. Leap. Breathe. Then leap some more.

Be well. Take care,  
JE., Montello, WI, USA

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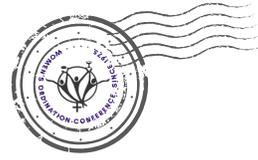
I'm filled with deep gratitude to be a descendant of Mary Magdalene and to know that God created all out of love and for the purpose of being love in this church! As a woman of the church and a deeply spiritual person, I see my role as equally important to all my fellow male Catholics in conveying God's love to all those I meet on this journey ... I know in my heart that Jesus called both men and women to be priestly ministers in this church, and I wholeheartedly support the belief that women were meant to be called into the priesthood just as men are called...I pray that you will "hear God calling you to 'Listen'" to the valuable gift the church is missing by not having ordained women actively engaged in their called ministry!



— MG, Ph.D., Monroe Township, NJ, USA

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*We are all created in the image and likeness of God. The sexism of the Catholic Church must end.*

*— MM, Diocese of Portland, OR, USA*

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*It is my sense that Jesus intentionally chose Mary Magdalene to be the first person to witness the resurrection. And if we think about the cultural context of that timeframe, that was extremely profound for him to choose a woman. And she is known to us as the Apostle to the Apostles. For me that means that women are equal to men in all roles in the church. Yes, we all have our individual gifts and strengths and I believe that is by design but I think we are missing out by not having women in the Deacon role or in the role of priest. In my experience, women bring an energy and a compassion and big picture sense to humanity an expanding ability to forgive, be kind, empathetic and compassionate. We need that so much in this world right now. I see that essence in Mary mother of God and I see that in Mary Magdalene I hope that in the future that women can be treated as equals. I am grateful for you in your role as Pope. Thank you for listening,*

*— RH, Greenville, SC, USA*

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*"Hoping for equality is a pretty low bar" - Maria Riley*

— SD, McLean, VA, USA

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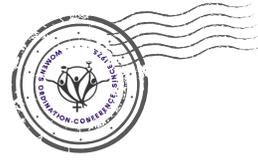


*I picked Magdalena as my confirmation name due to my fascination with Mary Magdalene. I'm inspired by her because of her dedication towards Christ's cause. She is aware of her value as a disciple and the connection she brings to sinful, lost communities.*

— SD, Archdiocese of Boston, USA

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*Mary Magdalene gives me hope that we will be seen and treated as full human beings. More importantly for me though is I would like to be an ongoing adviser to Pope Leo and have been working on ways to bring this to his attention. He has to say to yes, of course, but that can't happen unless he knows someone is asking.*

— AA, San Bernardino, CA, USA

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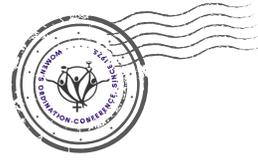


*I'm a proud Catholic woman to be a descendent of Mary Magdalene. She inspires me to live and preach the gospel in everything that I do. Her role as the apostle to the apostles gave me belief that God believes in the importance of women in the Church and will lead us soon to true equality. Her example, along with my priest's personal belief that women should occupy Church leadership positions, brought me back to Catholicism and led me to become a catechist who is deeply involved in the work of my church.*

— CL, Broken Bay, Australia

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Mary of Magdala, the apostle to the apostles, got the message Jesus professed. She didn't let the male apostles take that from her. St. Paul got it too. So when the humans of the church forget how Jesus treated women as equals in the ministry, I take courage from all the Mary's, who kept the faith and kept moving forward. I don't need to be Roman to be Catholic.

— RD, Ohio, USA

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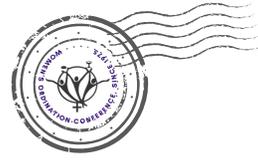


I am a Catholic on and off for 72 years. It seems to me that God/Jesus would want women to be fully integrated into the Church and its work. We have the right to be priests and deacons. The Church cannot go on relying on an outdated scripture to deny us this opportunity. I pray that the Pope will be divinely inspired and right this wrong.

— AM, Bethlehem, PA, USA

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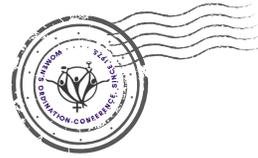




*She was Jesus' companion and created his message of love and openness to the Spirit She was the first person Jesus appeared to after his death. She was the Apostle to the Apostles.*

*— P, Newark, NJ, USA*

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*To be a descendant of Mary Magdalene empowers me to Proclaim the Good News of the Gospel. She reminds me to claim the many gifts I received when I was baptized in 1958, that I am a Priest, a Prophet, and a Leader. (I do not use the word king). I listen and help release chains that bind from alcoholism; I touch and heal the broken hearted; companion those who are dying, and much more.*

*— CN, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, USA*

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The Migdal was more than the first female deacon; she was the first female presbyter. Peter denied the mission which Christ personally gave her to be both, as has every one of his successors.



There is no biblical, theological or reason buried in Tradition why the female diaconate cannot be restored. Stop wasting feminine ministerial charisms, because your brothers think their body parts are holier, and think we will "settle for leadership roles" (hint, not only will we not, but young potential Catholics are over the obvious misogyny).

How long Leo, how long, dear brother?

Minimally, restore the female diaconate, as needed (PRN) by each bishop, as Francis did for the non-cisgendered blessings for our siblings. And consider putting a 5 year cap on full global rollout, to prevent the same stalling caused by the lack of a timed phase out for the "Latin Mass".

— DZ, St. Louis, MO, USA

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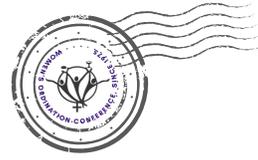


Like Mary Magdalene, I am called to proclaim the good news of God's boundless love and compassion for all and in all. As a priest, I am living Jesus's example of an open table in Mary Mother of Jesus Catholic Community in Sarasota, Florida. As a bishop, I ordain women called to a renewed priestly ministry in communities of baptized equals to foster a more inclusive church of baptized equals in which all are welcome and invited to receive sacraments.

— BMM, ARCWP

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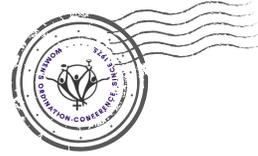
*To be a descendant of Mary Magdalene means that we follow in the footsteps of those who came before and that the hope for equality, inclusion and liberation in the Jesus movement was there from the very beginning and still challenges us to rise up and live out that challenging, revolutionary, love-filled vision.*

*— MA, Washington, DC, USA*

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*As a female when I was a child and now that I am elderly, I have noticed that the male hierarchy of the RC church often treats me as someone "lesser". Certainly Mary Magdalene was initially seen as "lesser" by others in the community.*



*One example of me feeling "lesser" was that as a child I was not allowed to serve Mass, only boys were to serve (but now that has thankfully changed). Another example was that as an adult I was told that the "biggest" sin of women was disobedience—disobedience toward the hierarchy of the church. This amazed me as I had believed (and still do) that my conscience was an important tool to guide my actions.*

*Another example is of course that women's roles within the church are restricted with no consideration of that woman's God given gifts. Why is the church not honouring those God given gifts bestowed on women as well as men to be priests or leaders? Mary Magdalene, a woman, was the first person gifted to understand the Resurrection of Jesus and to share that knowledge with others in her community. Jesus certainly did not view her as "lesser"!*

*— VM, Calgary, Alberta, Canada*

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*Since she was the first to see the risen Jesus, it's impossible to ignore her privilege among apostles. As a woman in the church longing to see women in receipt of ALL the sacraments, I take courage from her vision.*

— MJT, Newark Archdiocese, USA

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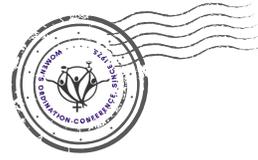


*Women are rising to achieve equality as descendants of Eve, the Blessed Mother Mary, and the many wise women in sacred Scripture. Created in the image of God, the Creator, empowers us in baptism as a priestly community, enabling us to serve alongside our male counterparts as equals. That means to be like Mary Magdalene, a priest, a preacher, a teacher, a healer, a community leader, and a woman.*

— AP, Archdiocese of Newark, USA

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Mary Magdalene took initiative. She was not afraid to go to the tomb. She was not believed because as today, men do not necessarily believe what women have to say. It is sad how the church has kept her hidden until recently. Mary Magdalene represents so many women who want to tell their story within the church but are not allowed to. Jesus welcomed her. Why can't members of the hierarchy welcome her and encourage her in what she has been called to. In many cases, this call is to become a priest in the church. Please listen, Pope Leo to this call. It will not be easy for you but listen to the movement of the Spirit.

— BT, Lindenwold, NJ, USA

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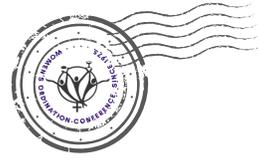


I am a convert from Judaism and I began to be deeply moved by the Catholic faith 20 years ago. Coming from a family with a strong emphasis on justice and women's rights, I was very drawn to Mary Magdalene. I think Jesus chose her as the first person to witness the Resurrection as part of a plan to emphasize the equality of women and men. She has inspired me for years and is a saint who moves and motivates me to be a better person and as an advocate for Jesus' love for all of us.

— DR, Brooklyn, NY, USA

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*Being a descendant of Mary Magdalene means being proud to be associated with someone incredibly brave, intuitive, and spiritual. She inspires my faith because I know she was strong, insightful, and wise. She gives me hope for equality in the church because I believe Jesus Himself valued her immensely and saw her as equal to any man.*

— Anonymous, South Carolina, USA

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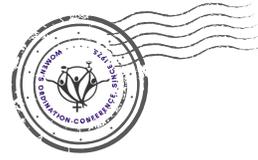


*Mary Magdalene inspired me to keep up with my studies as I pursued my master's degree in theology. She gave me hope for the inclusion of women in the sacrament of Holy Orders and therefore hope for the future of our church. Please hear our voices through her life story. Now is the time of renewed hope and it is time to realize the current leadership status quo is on nimble legs - NOW is the time to strengthen our Catholic Church, inspired by and set as examples of faith by countless women in our faith history.*

— MM, Hartford, CT, USA

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*[Being a descendant of Mary Magdalene] means that my faith, my voice, and my contributions to my parish, diocese, and our universal Church are just as valid, important, and essential as any male, whether ordained or lay. Men may perform the Sacraments, but lay women are often the ones guiding parish and faith communities closer to God.*

— LCG, Des Moines, IA, USA

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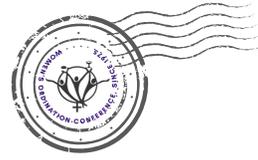


*She inspires my faith as she resiliently followed Christ during the tough times, had the courage to stand at his crucifixion and announce the news of his Resurrection. She has been dismissed throughout the ages as a "prostitute" as a way of dismissing her, but she stood physically, historically and spiritually alongside Jesus and his mother Mary. My hope is that her persistence will continue to strengthen me. I am now 75 and for over 30 years I have had a persistent calling to sacramental ministry which I cannot "test" within the current Church structures. As a mother, grandmother, widow, social worker, counsellor, former hospice bereavement coordinator and pastoral worker with a theology Masters, I am a member of a parish and also work in pastoral care with older Religious Sisters. My vision is to be acceptable as part of a sacramental team ministry in my parish and wider, offering my gifts and life experience to others sacramentally and spiritually.*

— PB, Leeds Diocese, UK

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*The tarnishing of Mary Magdalene (calling her a prostitute) reveals a lot about the fear driven oppression of half the world's population by church hierarchy. It's time to change this. We need the example of our female teachers and prophets. Hold her up for us, our daughters and granddaughters.*

— GB, Allentown, PA, USA

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*My Catholic church tells me that I am not made in the image of God because I am not in the image of Jesus. I do not understand why if Jesus is God and I am made in the image of God that I cannot be a priest. How can I encourage my granddaughter to go to school and be all she can be and still ask her to stay in a church that does not give her equality with her brother? How can I raise my grandson to be a good man who respects the equality of women and still ask him to stay in a church that teaches him that his sister is not equal in God's eyes? It is hypocrisy to tell them that God loves them and that they are made in God's image when the Church tells them otherwise. My heart is broken that after generations of being faithful Catholics, my family will be forced to leave the Church because our Mother Church is against the Christian values that we believe in, but we cannot teach our children in a church that is for discrimination.*

— ME, Cape Town, South Africa

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*Mary of Magdala seems misunderstood and passed by by some of her peers, even scapegoated in history wrongly accused of being the adulteress woman by church officials. We now acknowledge her sainthood and ministry as "Apostle to the Apostles." If Jesus had ordained anyone, he would have included Mary. How can we not include women in the realm of ordination, especially when our church and world are so in need of leadership and ministers? In our Diocese, many of us were Pastoral Administrators, accepted by total congregations and celebrated for our homilies, leadership as pastors, and spirituality under our Bishop Matthew Clark. Why not now?*

— ND, Rochester, NY, USA

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*The scriptural Mary Magdalen is a beacon for all women in the Church because she challenges directly that powerful mariology which seeks to roll every actual woman into the mythical figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She's a clear demonstration for women like me, called to full sacramental ministry, of the profound freedom Jesus gave and gives to every kind of woman to follow him wherever he calls.*

— OP, United Kingdom

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*Mary Magdalene reveals the truth that we are all one in Christ Jesus. As a woman, she brought to light faith in the resurrection for all of us. She is an inspiration to women who follow after her. I hope for a new creation of equality in the church because of her love.*

*— JS, Diocese of Youngstown, OH, USA*

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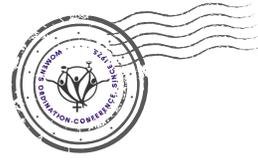


*The risen Jesus appeared first to a woman. Her name was Mary Magdalene. It makes absolutely no sense for the RC Church to call Mary Magdalene the Apostle to the Apostles and at the same time refuse to ordain women claiming some sort of 'apostolic succession that is all male!' We ask you to honour Jesus's honouring of Mary Magdalene and ordain women.*

*— PM, Birmingham Diocese, UK*

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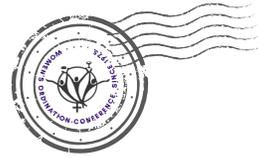




*Many of Jesus' listeners didn't like what he said, decided they were "hard words" and turned away. In succeeding generations those tendencies invaded Christian hearts and decided women were not to be educated or listened to. Only in the last hundred years has western culture begun to take Jesus' instructions at face value, and the Church is slower than most institutions to follow. Women ARE called by God, just as surely as any male might be. When the Church stands in their way it harms not just women but the entire Church, and is a scandal to non-believers. Mary Magdalene was as close to Jesus as any disciple, and should be celebrated as an example to all. Women should (MUST) be eligible for every level of participation in the Church Jesus left us.*

— GV, St. Louis, MO, USA

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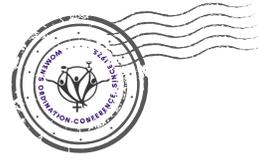


*For over a decade a group of women from our parish have met "outside" the traditional church settings to celebrate Mary Magdalene's Feast and one another's gifts. I am inspired that Jesus calls Mary Magdalene by name and she recognizes the risen Christ. How can we not experience the energy exchange in Mary's key Gospel moments with the Lord? In turn, we have honored and lifted each other up through our gatherings. We have created space for our unique talents and leadership strengths to shine even when our own parish doesn't tap into the value of our gifts as women. We inspire one another by our lives and witness. Just as Mary was sent forth, so are we - to hold a vision of gender equity and inclusion in our faith communities and world.*

— Anonymous, California, USA

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*We are all God's children and heirs to God's infinite grace and mercy. Mary Magdalene had faith that God's salvation was not out of reach for her. This inspires my faith too. The dignity of all is equal in God's eyes. Because of this the Church need only look to her example to reaffirm the importance of equality, and reaffirm that all are welcome.*

*— AB, Fayetteville, NC, USA*

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*Dear Pope Leo,*

*Mary Magdalene was chosen by the risen Christ to be the first person on earth to know of his resurrection and take this news to His other followers, who at first did not believe her.*

*From her I know that Christ had no problem in making a woman a representative of His risen self. And from this I know that I deserve equality in His church on earth as in heaven.*

*I am a woman, I am a descendant of Mary Magdalene.  
I am in Christ and He in me.*

*Your support for an exclusively masculine priesthood is a sin . Please untie yourself and the church you lead, from this grave sin.*

*— JD, Arundel and Brighton, UK*

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*In the spirit of apostolic succession, Mary Magdalene inspires me to trust my spiritual authority to preach the good news of Jesus' resurrection. Like Mary, I encounter the risen Christ in intimate ways and listen to and respond to Jesus' call to go to the others and tell them that "I have seen the Lord!" The authority Jesus gave Mary Magdalene as the first apostle should have meant that women were always sharing that role with men, but it is not too late to correct the course and return to Jesus' mandate for how we help usher in the God's vision for this life, and the next.*

— LM, Washington, DC, USA

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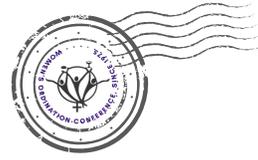


*From the Gospels it appears that Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene before appearing to the apostles and asked her to report the good news to the apostles. Knowing this, I hope Christ's Church today will (1) recognize the importance Christ showed to women in His time, and (2) will now recognize and allow women today to share in a similar ministry.*

— TP, Cleveland, OH, USA

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*I think sainthood can be present in people regardless of their sex. I think our church descends as much from Peter and Paul as it does from Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene inspires me because no matter what some of us have been taught directly or indirectly, being born female doesn't make us have any lesser or different capacities than men in the matters of spirituality.*

— DS, Arquidiocesis de Tijuana, Mexico

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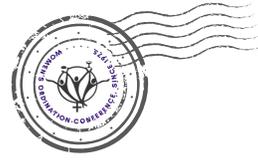


*She was a woman with her own opinion and something to say between a group dominated by men. As I am a physicist working in a technical job, this is also what I experience each day. I was part of a female minority at university and still am at work. But the difference to the church is that I have the possibility to be part of. And also Mary Magdalene was part of the group around Jesus. Women do a big part of work, in their jobs, at their homes and also in the church, but a "Thank you" is not enough. We deserve the same possibility for responsibilities, just as Mary Magdalene deserves a part between the disciples.*

— BW., Austria

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*I am a member of the Missionary Cenacle Family, the lay branch, MCA, since 1992. Our motto is 'Be good, do good, be a power for good.' Mary Magdalene, as the apostle to the apostles, inspires me with what we can do in the providence of our everyday lives, to share the good news of Jesus and God's love for all. God is with us, we can do what God gives us to do, as her descendants in faith.*

— MF, Diocese of Cleveland, USA

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*Knowing that Mary of Magdala loved and was loved by Christ touches my heart. That she stayed by his side during the crucifixion inspires me to be with the body of Christ in pain and suffering today. That she was the first to meet the Risen Christ and carry his message to others encourages me to stay close to, believe in, and love Christ so as to be his message in the world. That she was so misunderstood and maligned in later years of the Church makes me want to work harder for the true history of her life and the role of women in the church so we can live an authentic Christian Catholic church not filtered by the patriarchal spin that has haunted us for centuries.*

— SG, Bardstown, KY, USA

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To be a descendant of Mary Magdalene is an inspiration that she accompanied Jesus through his Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection. Can you imagine? Who else had that love and honor to be present for their teacher and friend? That goes beyond anyone's interaction with Jesus!



I am inspired that the Risen Christ chose Mary Magdalene to go and announce his Resurrection to the other apostles. Pope Leo's motto "Illo Uno Unum", In the One we are One focuses on unity of one body of Christ, in the Risen Christ which Mary Magdalene witnessed first, and St Augustine expounded in his Exposition on Psalm 127. When St Augustine states "we are many and we are one" I believe he means both man and woman.

As with Mary Magdalene and St Augustine, I too am unified with fellow Christians, male or female, for we are one in Christ. I am heartened as well that Pope Leo believes in promoting the Church's communion, participation and mission which are the three key words of the Synod.

Mary Magdalene inspires me and gives me hope that her witness, her apostleship will unify women into full communion, full equality, with our Church.

In Christ,  
SRS, Archdiocese of San Francisco, USA

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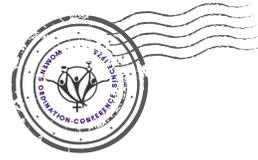
Mary Magdalene was chosen by God – not for her status as wife or mother, but for her faith and courage. She was the first to proclaim Christ's resurrection and led the apostles out of hiding. Because of her, my hope is that Church leadership will be inspired to follow Jesus' example of fully embracing women for the fullness of their God-given gifts, callings, bold witness, and leadership. By remembering Mary Magdalene, we are reminded that God's ways are not our ways – God can call women into ministry as priests, deacons, and lay leaders, too.



— KO, Phoenix, AZ, USA

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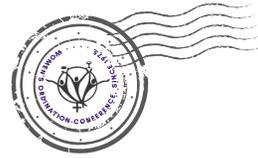




*Mary Magdalene walked with Jesus throughout his ministry, was faithful to the end and the first to see Him risen. It gives me hope that the church will someday recognize the equality and gifts of women in the church.*

— CD, Cincinnati, OH, USA

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*Saint Mary Magdalene offers us her extraordinary example of bearing witness to pain and sorrow and in this, seeing hope and new life, through the gift of love. As descendants of Mary Magdalene, may we all encounter the divine through our very human actions of taking care of creation, of priestly anointing of the sick and the dead, of tending the gardens, of preparing and sharing food, of loving one another, especially our enemy neighbors. In the moments we take to weep at the empty tombs of life, as we sit on the brink of despair, may we see and recognize God's shimmering glory and grace before us. That deep joy that nothing can take away. Christ calling our name!*

— JVM, Washington, D.C., USA

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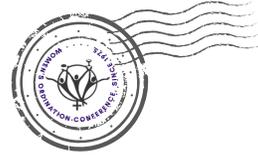




*What does it mean to be a descendant of Mary Magdalene? It means when I proclaim the risen Christ, I say with my mouth and my heart "I BELIEVE A WOMAN." I cannot claim to believe in Christ who conquers death without believing in the eyewitness testimony of a woman, and without knowing that God in His majesty, Providence, and justice for \*all\* His creatures deigned that all who profess His work for us must first accept the truth that a woman was an honest and reliable interpreter of reality. Our world is hostile to the experiences and first hand accounts of women, and yet the gospel is built upon their testimony. When men cry out against me, I for certain know God cries out for me in the voice of these women. In Anne Catherine Emmerich's vision of Mary Magdalene, she witnesses a woman with a great and noble heart so moved by Jesus' preaching that she defies all culturally contingent notions of respectability to anoint Jesus' head in a room full of scandalized people, much to Jesus' applause. She shows us what Jesus actually values, which is boldness of the heart towards its true end in God and His community. When all falls away no person of any gender can find fault with her, because deep down we all understand somehow that it is not gender that sets our vocation in God but grit, fidelity, and love.*

— EW, Wilmington, CA, USA

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*Mary Magdalene shows that women have always been an essential pillar of the Church, from Jesus' direct order to "go and tell the good news". Mary shows us that women's witness and preaching of Jesus is the only way that His story has continued to be loved and told for 2000 years. Mary Magdalene and Mary Mother of God are two of the biggest reasons I joined the Church, because very few Christian traditions actually acknowledge and are aware of their roles in Jesus' life and ministry. But the Church needs to listen to Jesus' words and pay attention to his actions. He constantly affirmed the place of women in his ministry. We would not be Christians without Mary Magdalene.*

— MB, Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, USA

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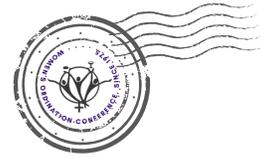




*Being a descendant of Mary means that I can't be silent or erased. Like hers, my history matters. She calls me to stay present at whatever empty tomb comes my way. She sits with us all in our grief and in so doing gives us Revelation. Her witness changes the world and I can't picture my faith without her.*

— AG, Washington, D.C., USA

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*We know from the Gospels that Mary Magdalene was closer to Jesus than any of the other Apostles. In fact, Peter was jealous of her. She loved Jesus and listened to his words. She was present at his crucifixion and at the tomb. He appeared to her as well after the Resurrection. Jesus apparently shared his prophetic words with her more than anyone else. She has always and consistently inspired my faith and hope for equality in the Church.*

— JSD, ARCWP

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Your Holiness,

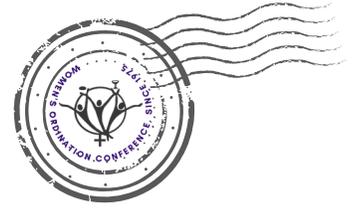
With deepest reverence and hope in the risen Christ, this message is offered as a testimony to the living Gospel—a call to remember what the Lord has already made new. Christ did not come to improve the systems of Caesar's empire. He came to make all things *kainos* (Revelation 21:5)—qualitatively new and different. The kingdom of God is not a cleaner version of male hierarchy. It is a Spirit-filled community of justice, dignity, and partnership—where daughters and sons alike are commissioned to proclaim the Gospel, bear witness, and shepherd God's people.

Our sister, Mary called the Magdalene was the first commissioned by the risen Christ to proclaim the resurrection (John 20:17–18)—not as a symbol, but as the apostle to the apostles. In her, Jesus revealed what His Church must become: a community where women proclaim the resurrection with His authority. The Church must submit to Christ—not silence those He commissions as priests, pastors, preachers, and apostolic witnesses.

The Magdalene did not stand alone. She walked in the legacy of foremothers before her and sisters after her who bore God's word, led His people, and stood in covenant faithfulness. Her calling is part of an unbroken line—hers, ours, and all God's daughters: called, appointed, and sent.

- Eve, created as *ezer kenegdo*—a strong aid and equal partner made in Your image (Genesis 1:27), whom God elevated to the status of a combatant of the serpent (Genesis 3:15).
- Miriam, prophetess, who led the people of Israel in worship, whom God sent before your people, alongside Moses and Aaron to lead them out of Egypt (Exodus 15:20; Micah 6:4).
- Deborah, prophetess and judge, whom God raised to oversee Israel and inspire the people in a time when leadership was reserved for men (Judges 2:16; Judges 4–5).
- Huldah, prophetess, whose word from God brought national repentance from the king and nation (2 Kings 22:14–20).
- Esther, who saved her people from the jaws of death (Esther 4).
- Mary of Nazareth, whose courageous "yes" bore the Word made flesh and whose words/"Magnificat" became part of holy Scripture (Luke 1:38, 46–55), full of God's theology.
- Samaritan woman, the first evangelist to the Gentiles who brought her whole village to believe in Jesus as the Messiah (John 4).
- Mary of Bethany, disciple at Jesus' feet, attending the best seminary ever, defended by Jesus who affirmed she chose the better part that will "not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:39–42) and who alone anointed the living body of Christ (John 12:3)—an act no male disciple performed—revealing that if she could tend to Christ's body then, she is entrusted to do so today.
- Daughters at Pentecost, filled and chosen—as a fulfillment, not an exception. (Acts 2:17, Joel 2:28)
- Junia, Your apostle—named, praised, and honored by Paul (Romans 16:7) and the early church fathers, not as a token, but as a partner in the gospel.
- Priscilla —often named before Aquila— who did not publicly rebuke or correct Apollos but took him aside—a mark of wise and discerning leadership (Acts 18:26). And since she taught a man outside the home, the Spirit would not silence her in the mixed-gender assembly of the Church that met inside her own (Romans 16:3–5).





- Phoebe, called *diakonos*- deacon and *prostatis*—"one who stands before"— a trusted church leader who delivered Paul's letter to the Romans (Romans 16:1-2), serving with the Spirit's authority long before formal pastoral epistles existed.

The same Spirit who empowered Miriam to lead the people in worship, Deborah to be judge over all of Israel, Mary to anoint Jesus' body and Priscilla to teach in assembly now fills the hearts of many of God's daughters today.

It is often said the Church cannot ordain women because Jesus chose twelve men to go out into the world. Besides the symbolism of the twelve tribes of Israel, Jesus Himself taught that some things were given not as God's ideal, but as concessions to hardened hearts (Matthew 19:8). The male Twelve were not a permanent blueprint—they were a wise strategy for brutal, patriarchal world. Jesus did not exclude women because of biology. He shielded them from harm, never denying their calling. When the time was right, history is witness that He entrusted women to teach, evangelize, lead, and testify. This was never a detour. It was always the destination.

Mistranslations and cultural fears have clouded Scripture's witness—but the Spirit's pattern is clear: women were never sidelined in Christ's mission, only in human tradition. The call for women's ordination is not rooted in modern progress, but in Christ Himself. He trusted women then. The Church must trust them now.

Holy Father, make the Church *kainos*. Imitate Christ—not Caesar. Build the kingdom—not preserve the empire. Welcome the daughters of God—not as exceptions, but as full and faithful partners in His redeeming work. As a descendant of Mary Magdalene—not by blood, but by calling—we write with gratitude and longing. She was the first to witness the resurrection and the first to be sent to proclaim it. Christ did not silence her. He commissioned her. To walk in her footsteps is to carry the Word with boldness and tenderness. Her life calls us to faith, not silence—to proclamation, not passivity.

Our hope is not for power, but for justice rooted in the gospel. We long for a Church that finally recognizes what Christ already affirmed: His Spirit calls both daughters and sons to shepherd, preach, and lead. May the Church be as obedient as the Magdalene.

In faith and fierce hope,  
A spiritual descendant of Mary, the Magdalene  
On behalf of my Catholic sisters in Christ—then, now, and still to come.

LT, New York, USA

