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Continuing Education Encore Events

Transcript of
"Mary Magdalene and the Women Disciples in the Gospel of Luke"

presented on July 21, 2017 by
Barbara Reid, O.P.

STM Dean Thomas Stegman, S.J.:

Good afternoon. Everyone get enough to eat? Good. It's my pleasure to introduce Sister Barbara Reid, who is a Dominican Sister of Grand Rapids, Michigan. She says that she heard the vocational call very early in life. She knew from age six that she wanted to be a Dominican Sister, like the intelligent, joyful, kind, and caring women who were her teachers throughout elementary and high school. Sister Barbara has very capably followed in the footsteps of these role models.

She holds a Ph.D. in biblical studies from the Catholic University of America and currently serves as vice president and academic dean as well as professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. She is a good friend of Boston College, having taught in the I.R.E.P.M.'s summer institute in past years. She is the former president of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2004-05, and she has led many study tours and retreats in the Holy Land.

Sister Barbara said, quote, "I think one of the things the Spirit does is bring newness to birth. She is a creative Spirit who brings joy and delight." It is this conviction that anchors her work, which is both scholarly and pastoral. Throughout her many publications, Sister Barbara explores feminist biblical interpretation—what it is, when it began, how to do it, and why it matters for both women and men.

Her most recent books are *Wisdom's Feast: An Introduction to Feminist Interpretation of the Scriptures*, published last year by Eerdmans, the three-volume work *Abiding Word: Sunday Reflections for Year A, B and C*, published by Liturgical Press, and *Taking Up the Cross: New Testament Interpretations through Latina and Feminist Eyes*, published by Fortress in 2007 and translated two years later into Spanish. She is widely known for her contributions to "The Word," a widely read column in the Jesuit weekly magazine *America*.

Nine years ago, Sister Barbara had an idea. She's had more than one idea, but this was a particularly good one. [laughter] I should have read the script a little more carefully. That didn't quite sound . . . So she had a great idea. She wanted to create a work of feminist biblical interpretation that would delve into every book of the Bible, something that had never been done before.

In 2015, the first three of what will ultimately be a 58-volume series of feminist biblical commentary were published by Liturgical Press. The series, entitled *The Wisdom Commentary*, features authors from diverse religious, racial, and cultural backgrounds, with Sister Barbara as general editor. With this work, her biggest hope is that this type of interpretation becomes standard fare and not something that requires an explanation. She said, "We all need to know how to interpret Scripture in ways that lead to the full flourishing of all people and all creation."

Sister Barbara Reid is a superb scholar and a dedicated woman of the Church, ably walking in the footsteps of Mary Magdalene as one who shares the Good News of the Risen Christ. Please join me in welcoming Sister Barbara to speak on "Mary Magdalene and the Women Disciples in the Gospel of Luke." [applause]

Sister Barbara Reid:

Thank you, Father Tom. That was quite some introduction. I hope I can live up to even half of it. I'm very, very grateful to be with you this afternoon, to return again to Boston College, where I did teach for several summers, and I'm just so pleased for the occasion for which we gather this afternoon.

As we reflect together on Mary Magdalene, and then I'm going to focus in precisely on what it says about her and about the women disciples in the Gospel of Luke. If you want a little roadmap to follow along, there's handouts in the center of your table. Don't worry, there will not be an exam. Mostly it's in case you didn't catch the Scripture reference and want to go back and find out where that is. So I'm very, very happy to share these reflections with you.

Two years ago, at Catholic Theological Union, where I minister, we received a gift of five paintings from the renowned artist Janet McKenzie. Most people know her portrait *Jesus of the People* that you see here. You've seen this before, yeah? She won the first prize back at the turn of the millennium for *National Catholic Reporter*'s Jesus of the Millennium contest.

The three paintings that we received, though, at Catholic Theological Union were her *Triptych on Mary Magdalene*. We had a celebration for the unveiling of these paintings. Our president, Mark Francis, asked me if I would make a more formal presentation to the group gathered about Mary Magdalene. He suggested teasingly that I tell the story of Mary Magdalene's arduous journey from Palestinian prostitute to a life of luxury on the French Riviera. [laughter]

It's good that you're laughing at that. Some people think that's true. Mark and I had a hearty laugh over it, too. But the fact that such myths about Mary Magdalene still persist, for which there is no biblical basis, it's true this still prevails in the minds of many believers. But that's changing, however, as gatherings like this one help to bring forward Mary Magdalene as Apostle to the Apostles, as she became known in the early Church.

What the Gospels actually say about Mary Magdalene is finally starting to become better known. But if you ask most Christians, "Who was Mary Magdalene," what are they going to tell you? Yeah, that she was a repentant prostitute, or maybe they'll tell you she was the one who wept over Jesus's feet and dried them with her hair, or maybe they'll tell you that she was the woman who was caught in adultery and was about to be stoned before Jesus intervened. But in the Gospels, none of those things are said of Mary Magdalene. Nowhere is there even a reference to her having been a sinner, much less a prostitute. The confusion between these other women and Mary of Magdala was reinforced by Pope Gregory the Great, who conflated all of them in his Easter homily in 591.

Christian artists have also confused the various stories, which has helped to reinforce false images of Mary Magdalene. Paintings such as that of Titian depict Mary as morosely repentant, half-clothed. I'm unclear about what the state of undress has to do with repentance. [laughter] Or they even depict her as naked, as in this painting by Quentin Metsys that juxtaposes so-called penitent Mary Magdalene with a different legionary, Mary of Egypt, who went to the desert to repent and whose hair covered her after her clothes deteriorated. For some reason, there's a greater fascination with the story of a sinner who repents dramatically than with the story of a woman who became Apostle to the Apostles.

While there's no Gospel evidence to support it, some still like to think of Mary Magdalene as the forgiven woman at the home of Simon the Pharisee, as in this painting by Rubens, or as the woman caught in adultery. And modern artists such as the popular Chinese artist He Qi still confuse Mary with the anonymous woman who anointed Jesus. The most extreme version of a myth about Mary Magdalene was revived in 2004 by Dan Brown in his book *The Da Vinci Code*, where he advanced that

Mary was pregnant with Jesus's child and went to France, where her descendants eventually founded the Merovingian line of kings. Brown's highly fictitious book depicts Mary as the Holy Grail in Da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper rather than the chalice from which Jesus drank.

Now, I am imagining that you already know what the Gospels actually say about Mary Magdalene. A group like this doesn't need a rehearsal of all of this. But just for a little bit of a review, the Gospels actually say that she and other Galilean women had been following and ministering with Jesus in the Galilee and that they came up to Jerusalem with him, witnessed the Crucifixion, saw where he was buried, and were the first to discover the Empty Tomb and be commissioned to tell the Good News to the others.

All four Gospels agree on this, although each of them tells it slightly differently. In Matthew and John, Mary Magdalene is the first one to whom the Risen Christ appears. Luke is the only one that introduces Mary Magdalene and her companions to us earlier in the story, and it is this Gospel that I want to focus on for the remainder of this presentation. In the middle of the Galilean ministry at 8:1-3, Luke tells us that Jesus is making his way through cities and villages proclaiming and bringing the Good News of the Kingdom of God. "The Twelve were with him," these are Luke's words, "as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called the Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna and many other women who provided for them out of their resources."

This text is the only one that tells us anything about Mary Magdalene prior to her following Jesus to Jerusalem, and Luke only gives us a few scant details. He does not tell us how Jesus and Mary met. Nor does he tell us whether she was married, widowed, divorced, or never married. It's unusual that a woman is named in the Bible without reference to her husband or father or son.

Instead, what identifies her is the town from which she comes, Magdala, which you can see on the map here on the left. You see Magdala right there, right in the center on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. In Jesus's day, it was a very important fishing town. And on the right-hand side, you can see a mosaic of a fishing boat from Magdala that dates to the first century. Sardines are still the most abundant fish caught in the Sea of Galilee, and in the first century, they were smoked and salted at Magdala for export.

Here you see recent excavations at Magdala, which is becoming a popular pilgrim site once again. For many years, it was all covered over, much like the real story of Mary Magdalene. But the Legionnaires of Christ acquired the site in 2009, and they've been developing it for, they've been planning a pilgrim center, a guesthouse, a restaurant. Part of the center is open as this chapel that they have constructed on the site.

So now here I have to do a little paid political announcement. Agreeing to release me from CTU for the day to come to Boston College, I have to put in a plug for CTU. Want to see this chapel? Come with us on the Biblical Study and Travel Program that we will have to Israel that Father Leslie Hoppe and myself will lead May 27th to June 9th this coming year. More to come. OK, thank you for your . . . [laughter] no, I am serious. We'd be happy to have you come.

So perhaps Mary was involved in the fishing industry at Magdala, and maybe she met Jesus in a similar way as he did Peter and James and John. That trio, who left all to follow Jesus, is mirrored in the three women named in Luke 8:2-3—Mary, Joanna, and Susanna, who accompanied Jesus as he preached the Good News throughout the various cities and villages.

Luke says that they had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, and now they are very well and are devoting themselves to Jesus's mission. What kind of service were Mary Magdalene and the other women performing while they were on the road with Jesus? Some imagine Mary and her companions cooking, cleaning, and sewing for Jesus and the male disciples. But the Greek text in Luke 8:3, I can tell you don't need this, you already know. But the Greek text in Luke 8:3 tells us, rather, that the women were "deaconating"—*diekonoun* in Greek—ministering, out of their monetary resources. The verb *diakonein* refers to various types of ministry in the Gospel and Acts of the Apostles: ministry of the word, ministry of the table, apostolic ministry. Jesus describes his own ministry with this term when he says he is among them as "one who serves," *ho diakonon*, in Luke 22:27, at the Last Supper scene.

In the case of Mary, Joanna, and Susanna, Luke specifies what kind of ministry they were doing. He says they were *deaconating* out of their resources. And the Greek word *hyparchonton*, "resources," means monetary resources. And *autais*, "there," is a feminine plural possessive pronoun indicating that the money is their own, not the common purse. Remember, in John's Gospel, chapter 12, verse 6, it says that "Judas kept the common purse and used to steal what was put in it."

So Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna are business partners with Jesus, financing the mission, accompanying him as he goes from town to town, and participating in the proclamation of the Good News. Mary Magdalene slips out of sight then in the rest of the Gospel, and her next appearance is at the end, where she is again accompanied by Joanna and this time Mary, the mother of James, and other women from Galilee, according to Luke 24:10. In Luke's version of the scene at the Empty Tomb, the women find the stone rolled away from the tomb, go in, and are perplexed not to find the body. Two men in dazzling clothes suddenly stand beside them. The women are terrified and bow their faces to the ground, and the men say to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen."

Luke continues this way: "'Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee that the son of humanity 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 the rest." Luke continues, "Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe it. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb. Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves, and then he went home amazed at what had happened."

Now, this ending is slightly different from that of the other Gospels. In Mark, Mary and her companions say nothing to anyone because they are afraid. In Matthew, nothing is said about whether the women fulfill the command to tell the others or what the reaction was. In John, Mary Magdalene faithfully announces to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and she told them that he had said these things to her. We heard that version at today's liturgy.

It would take another set of lectures to explore the meaning behind the endings of the other three Gospels, but I want to look more closely at the ending in Luke and to situate it in the larger context of Luke's treatment of women throughout the whole of the Gospel. In particular, I want to see whether Luke silences women throughout. Ultimately, my concern is *how do we appropriate this text today? Does Luke help or hinder us in the struggles of women to exercise the ministries of the Word to which we are called?*

It has long been observed that the Gospel of Luke has more episodes that feature women than any other Gospel. So during the first wave of feminism, there were scholars who championed Luke, saying this is the Gospel for women. But just sheer numbers of women is not all it takes. The second wave

of feminism, which emerged in the late 1980s, saw women biblical scholars turning a more critical eye to how women are portrayed in Luke and Acts. Scholars like Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in her book *In Memory of Her* in 1983 and Mary Rose D'Angelo in an important article in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* in 1990 and Jane Schaberg in the first edition of the *Women's Bible Commentary* in 1992 were among the first to show that although Luke knew of women prophets, leaders, and missionaries, he does not portray them as such. These scholars noted that no woman outside the Infancy Narratives speaks except to be corrected by Jesus or to be disbelieved. For Luke, women have chosen the better part when they remain silent and receptive.

Building on the work of these scholars, I showed in my book, *Choosing the Better Part: Women in the Gospel of Luke*, which I wrote in 1996, that there are women who receive the Word, believe, are baptized, follow Jesus, and host house churches, but there are no narratives showing individual women as called, commissioned, enduring persecution, or ministering by the power of the Spirit as there are of men. Women in Luke and Acts do not imitate Jesus's mission of preaching, teaching, healing, exorcising, forgiving, or praying. Only men are depicted in these roles. I observed then that women in the third Gospel are healed by Jesus and are objects of his compassion, and they listen to the Word, but nothing is related about how their discipleship is put into action, except for Mary Magdalene and her companions, whose financial ministry I saw as an ancillary service to the mission of Jesus and his 12 chosen male apostles in gratitude for their healing.

When it comes to proclaiming the Word, of the 57 instances of the verbs for preaching, announcing, or proclaiming in Luke and Acts, only once, at Luke 24:9, are women the subject, and they are not believed. Since Luke claims to have investigated everything accurately, chapter 1, verse 3, I thought it likely that Luke knew of women who were participating actively and visibly in leadership in the early apostolic ministries, such as those named in Paul's Letters. I concluded that Luke disapproved of such women, that he was convinced that women and men have different ways of being disciples, and that he, like the authors of the pastoral Letters, was intent on restricting the women to silent, passive, supportive roles.

In the final chapter of my book, I stressed Luke's diminishment of the role of women in the Gospel's last two chapters in comparison with the other three Gospels. I interpreted Luke's addition of all his acquaintances in the Crucifixion scene at 23:49 as taking the spotlight away from the women who had followed him from Galilee, who were clearly the original witnesses, as the feminine participle *horosai,* "watching," at 23:49 indicates.

Another way I saw that Luke reduces the importance of Mary Magdalene and her companions is that he delays naming the women until 24:10, in contrast to Mark, who names them three times as witnesses in the Crucifixion scene, the Burial, and in the first verse of the Empty Tomb account.

I interpreted the lack of a commission to the women to proclaim the Good News in Luke, in contrast to Mark 16:7, Matthew 28:7 and 10, and John 20:17, as Luke's intent to emphasize that it is the role of male disciples to proclaim and give witness. This intent is reinforced by the women not being believed in 24:11 and the characterization of their words as *leros*, "nonsense," as the NAB translates it, or "an idle tale," as the NRSV renders it.

I observed that the lack of an appearance of the Risen Christ to Mary Magdalene and the other women at the tomb in Luke, in contrast to Matthew and John, was meant to underscore the primacy of Peter, who verifies that the tomb is empty in 24:12 and to whom the Risen Christ is said to have appeared in 24:34.

I concluded, "A woman reader of this Gospel internalizes the message that if she dares to speak, she will never be believed, nor be credited with faithful and true witness. This final episode," I continued to say, "causes women to doubt the authenticity of their own experience and their ability to interpret God's ways accurately to others. They can remember what they have heard, but it is for the men to interpret and proclaim."

I proposed, then, that "Today our proclamation of Luke's version of the empty tomb story can serve to ritualize the grief that women have experienced for 20 centuries when their faithful and true witness is dismissed as nonsense. It can remind us of the deprivation imposed on the whole Christian community when its female members are silenced. It can move believers to choose the better part by taking actions to ensure the faithful preaching of women be heard and accepted in our day."

Twenty years later, I still think there is value in this approach that exposes the silencing of women in Luke and Acts and raises questions about how that portrayal is to be appropriated by women and men in the Church today. However, I also see the limitations of the approach that I took then. One limitation is that I examined only the texts in Luke with female characters. Another is that I sometimes read these episodes in isolation from one another. In particular, I separated out Luke 1 and 2, where the women do speak in powerful prophesies, from the rest of the Gospel. In addition, I did extensive word studies, but there are dynamics in the text that can be missed when one concentrates only on the use of particular words. And finally, in focusing primarily on the ways in which Luke restricts women, I overlooked positive portrayals.

Almost the same time that my book was published, Turid Karlsen Seim in 1994 published a book entitled *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts*. She argues that the Gospel of Luke is ambiguous, neither wholly affirmative nor totally restrictive toward women. She points out that the Gospel cannot be reduced to fixed scenes but must be read as a narrative with complex movement and process, with contrapuntal voices, not frozen images.

With her observations in mind, I revisited the question of the silencing of women in Luke, and in particular my reading of the last two chapters of Luke's Gospel. That was the subject of my presidential address to the Catholic Biblical Association two years ago. I'll give you the Cliff Notes version. If you want all the gory details, you can read the published version in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* in the January 2016 issue. But here's the *Reader's Digest* version.

Let's start first with the opening chapters, the opening two chapters of Luke. We find there a symphony of voices announcing theological and Christological themes that will resound throughout the whole of the Gospel. Significant proclamations are made by Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon with their canticles, as well as by Elizabeth, Anna, and John the Baptist. Startlingly enough, women speak as often as men, and what they say is significant theologically and Christologically.

Elizabeth interprets all that is happening as the actions of God, who delights in taking away her humiliation. That's the first thing she says, in chapter 1, verse 25. Then in the Visitation scene in chapter 1, verses 39 to 45, she pronounces a threefold blessing over Mary, prefiguring the way that Jesus pronounces blessings and gives instructions on what one must do to be blessed. Elizabeth's act of blessing also creates an *inclusio*, a big arc from the first chapter to the last chapter of the Gospel when it points to the final scene in the Gospel where the Risen Christ blesses His disciples, and they in turn bless God. That's in chapter 24, the last verses, 50 and 54.

There's one more place where Elizabeth's voice is heard, and that's toward the end of chapter 1, when they're about to name her child. The neighbors and relatives are all gathered, and they suggest that they name him Little Zach after his father. [laughter] You remember. Elizabeth strongly intervenes:

"By no means. He is to be called John," *Yohanan*. Now the expression, *ouchi alla*, "by no means," implies much more than a polite difference of opinion. It is an emphatic exclamation and a corrective.

Back to the Visitation scene again, we have a very important declaration by Mary, the mother of Jesus. She's the first to utter a lengthy canticle. It's a prophetic proclamation with very significant theological statements. It is preceded by her famous reply to Gabriel in the annunciation scene: "Here I am, the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me according to your Word." That's a very important response. It echoes the responses of the prophets and the leaders in the Old Testament whom God chooses, like Samuel, Moses, Joshua, David, and Hannah. Also, it echoes the disciples whom Jesus will call. It echoes their response: "Here I am, the servant of the Lord."

Mary's response, "Let it be with me according to your Word," also points forward to Jesus's declaration on the Mount of Olives when he is imploring his father, "Not my will but yours be done." Also, when Mary says she is servant of the Lord, it also echoes Jesus's own, or I should say foreshadows Jesus's own articulation of His mission, where at 22:27, at the Last Supper, He says "I am among you as one who serves."

Mary's prophetic canticle echoes the songs of Miriam in Exodus 15, Judith in Judith 16, Deborah in Judges 5, and Hannah in First Samuel 2, acclaiming what God has done in the past and pointing ahead to how God's saving acts will be manifested in the ministry of her son and on into the future. She praises God as Lord, Savior, and Mighty One, ways that Luke also will speak of Jesus. She sings of how God has looked upon herself and upon all those who are humiliated, raising them up and filling the hungry with good things while sending the rich away empty.

These themes are played out more fully throughout the rest of the Gospel, as Jesus feeds the hungry and exhorts his followers about the dangers of riches. Mary praises God's endless mercy, foreshadowing Jesus's healing acts towards those who call out to him for mercy and his teachings and parables about being merciful and praying for mercy. The length of Mary's proclamation and its theological profundity are matched only by Zechariah's Canticle at the conclusion of chapter 1.

There is one more female voice in those first two chapters. The prophet Anna is the final woman to speak in the Infancy Narratives. Although her words are conveyed only in indirect speech, they contain an important Christological affirmation. She spoke to all who were looking for the "redemption," *lutrosin*, of Jerusalem. Her words echo Zechariah's prophecy, who praised God for having "redeemed" them, the same word, *lutrosin*. And then they arc forward to the words of Cleopas and his companion in the scene on the road to Emmaus, where they say "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem," same Greek verb there, "to redeem Israel."

In the remainder of the Gospel, not surprisingly, the majority of speaking is by Jesus. Few other characters, male or female, speak at any length. And what they say, whether they be a follower or an opponent of Jesus, most often shows misunderstanding or rejection. These utterances usually function to allow Jesus to correct and challenge what has been said. Those whose utterances are theologically and Christologically significant are few. But they include both females and males, as you can see in the list on the last part of page one of the handout. I'll leave those for your perusal at another time.

So what do I conclude at this point? As I look now at Luke's first volume, I see that women are not any more silent than men, and I recognize that there are important connections between the women prophets in Luke 1 and 2 and the Galilean women in Luke 24, who announce that Jesus is risen. So I have revised my previous interpretation of Luke 23 and 24. Today I come to a different conclusion

than the one I arrived at 20 years ago about Luke's depiction of women as regards their proclamation of the Word.

I had formerly separated the Infancy Narratives from the rest of the Gospel, instead of reading the beginning and the ending chapters in relation to one another. I thought that Luke's depiction of Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna in the mode of powerful prophets, in contrast to the silent women in the rest of the Gospel, could be explained by the Evangelist's understanding of salvation history divided into distinct eras, *as* Hans Conzelmann had proposed in 1961. He saw that there was the first period, the period of Israel, then the second was the period of Jesus's ministry, and then the third was the period since the Ascension, the period in which the disciples carried on Jesus's mission.

I saw the women in the first two chapters painted along the lines of the women prophets of the Old Testament, but these belonged to a former age. They were not disciples of Jesus, and they did not exemplify the role that Luke advocates for Christian women. However, I now see that there are strong verbal and thematic links between Luke 1 and 2 and Luke 23 and 24. The beginning and the ending must be read in tandem. By connecting the two, then we can see that the poor reception of the women's words at the tomb are not simply Luke's disregard for women's witness, but that's the typical response to the words of a prophet. Such a response is akin to the rejection Jesus experiences, first by the people in his hometown synagogue, as we see in Luke 4:28-30, and then consistently throughout the Gospel by the Pharisees and other opponents.

Seen from this angle, the rejection of the words of the women who were at the tomb can be seen as a confirmation of the truthfulness of their declaration and an affirmation of their ability to proclaim the word faithfully. Narratively, the women at the Cross, Burial, and Empty Tomb are the crucial link to the crucified and buried Jesus, whose tomb is empty. The women are also the connection back to Galilee, providing the necessary link for remembering what Jesus told the disciples. Luke twice notes, at 23:49 and at verse 55, that the women who saw the Crucifixion and how the body was laid in the tomb were the ones who had followed from Galilee.

After having introduced Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and the other Galilean women at 8:1-3 as accompanying Jesus and ministering with him while He was preaching in the cities and villages, Luke then implies, at 24:6-8, where the two angelic figures at the tomb tell them to remember, he implies that these women were present among the disciples who heard the Passion predictions in chapter 9 and chapter 17. The role of the women as faithful, persistent disciples then comes to the fore. They both hear and act on the Word.

The exhortation to the women to remember Jesus's Word echoes various statements earlier in the Gospel about hearing the Word and taking care of it or acting on it. Like Mary, who kept the Word in her heart, chapter 2, verses 19 and 51, the Galilean women remembered his words. They are, as Jesus says to the disciples at chapter 8, verse 15, the "good soil," who have heard the Word and hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bear fruit with patient endurance.

Remembering also means far more than simple recall. As with the admonitions in the Old Testament to remember the covenant, remembrance is always accompanied by action. For example, when God instructs Moses to have the Israelites make fringes on the corner of their garments, it is so they will remember and do all the Commandments. That's Numbers 15:39. Similarly, when God remembers, it results in saving action. This is what Mary and Zechariah sang about in their canticles in the first chapter, when they sing of God's remembrance of mercy manifest in saving deeds towards the ancestors and promise to all their descendants forever more.

That Jesus embodies this divine saving remembrance is evident in his actions throughout the whole Gospel and is made explicit in a detail unique to Luke in the Crucifixion scene, where one of the criminals hanging alongside him pleads, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." He doesn't just want Jesus to recall that he was next to Him. He wants Jesus to do something about bringing him along with him into the Kingdom.

In another saying unique to Luke among the Gospels, Jesus instructs the disciples at the Last Supper, "Do this in remembrance of me," asking the disciples not simply to bring him to mind as they break bread together but to make him present through their merciful actions. That the women at the tomb remember Jesus's words signifies not only that they were present when he spoke to the disciples in the Galilee but also that they faithfully continue his mission of enacting God's liberating mercy.

With regard to the lack of direct commission to the women to proclaim what they have heard, when read in the context of the whole Gospel with its emphasis on hearing and acting on the Word, the women's spontaneous proclamation is the proper response of faithful disciples. The imperfect tense of the verb, moreover, *elegon*, in 24:10, indicates that their "telling" is repeated. They continue to proclaim the Word as faithful witnesses. They are not one-time messengers to the other apostles.

Finally, placing the women's names at the close of the account in 24:10 can be read not as diminishing them but as following a protocol, whereby the names of witnesses are given at the conclusion of their testimony. The women's reliability as witnesses is affirmed in the next scene, where Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus repeat their message and assert that it has been verified. Moreover, placing the names of the women at verse 10 accentuates the contrast between the women as reliable and faithful witnesses and those who refuse to believe, in verse 11.

So here is my conclusion, which is not the last word. [laughter] Now, I probably am not going to change my mind again, but what I mean is that although Luke 23 and 24 can be read as affirming women's proclamation of the Word, this is not Luke's last word on the subject. In the Acts of the Apostles, his second volume, male disciples, primarily Peter and then Paul, take over the role of testifying to Jesus's Resurrection, and women fall completely silent. If we had another hour, I'd open up all of that for you.

But what I want to say, then, suggest that we do, is take Turid Karlsen Seim's argument that Luke leaves us with a double message, and then that means that we must take a dual approach to this Gospel—both enter into it to appreciate it and stand apart from it in order to assess its truth and helpfulness, as Jane Schaberg and Sharon Ringe advise in the *Women's Bible Commentary*. Rather than let Luke provide the final answers, we can allow his text to stimulate valuable questions and point to issues that demand rethinking. Luke's own use of the motif of memory not only invites us to recall that in the past, Mary Magdalene and the other women followers of Jesus were faithful witnesses and proclaimers of the Word, but also impels us toward present enactment of this memory for the well-being of the Church and world.

There are many ways in which we can exercise our remembrance and our enaction of the ministry of the Word, and it is important that we take every opportunity to do so. We are finding a voice in Catholic Women Preach and many other such venues, and we're thankful to the founders and executors of this splendid project for their presence here today and their brilliant idea of bringing the opening of the Word to so many people in this way.

It's also important, I think, to continue to raise our voices with respect and persistence, asking questions of our Church leaders about why biases against women proclaimers of the Word still persist. We ask, why are children accorded the privilege of hearing the Word proclaimed in their own

language, while women are not? The "Directory of Masses for Children" that was issued in 1973 is still in effect, and it says one of the adults may speak after the Gospel, especially if the priest finds it hard to adapt himself to the mentality of children, meaning that the preacher for children must be able to speak the language of children. So we should ask, do not women and laymen merit the same?

We also need to keep asking our bishops, who in the conclusion to their document "Preaching the Mystery of Faith" that they issued in 2013, held up Mary—this was in the conclusion to their document on preaching—they held up Mary, Jesus's mother, as the exemplar. They said, "Mary, as hearer and bearer of the Word, Mary the Mother of God and Mother of the Word Incarnate, can serve as an example for those who preach the Sunday homily." End quote. In it, though, they make no allowance for women preachers, who might most closely resemble Mary. They characterize the preacher of Sunday homilies as a man of holiness, a man of Scripture, a man of tradition, and a man of communion. Are not preachers also women of holiness, of Scripture, of tradition, and communion? We need to keep asking our bishops about this.

Pope Francis, in his wonderful section on preaching in *"Evangelii Gaudium*," spoke of preaching as, quote, "a mother's conversation." The Church is a mother, and she preaches in the same way that a mother speaks to her child. Just as all of us like to be spoken to in our mother tongue, so too in the faith we like to be spoken to in our mother culture, our native language, and our heart is better disposed to listen. But unfortunately, Pope Francis does not envision actual mothers or other women as preachers, who might best know the native languages of women.

We can take heart that Pope Francis also said, in his apostolic letter "*Evangelii Gaudium*," that there is a need for a more incisive female presence in the Church. That one puzzles me, though, since we know that women have always been present and ministering in the Church in powerful and prophetic ways. But perhaps there is also new hope with the commission Pope Francis has established to study the deaconate for women. But in the meantime, we hold Mary Magdalene and her sisters as beacons of hope that despite all the challenges, the word preached by women will continue to be heard and believed. Thank you.

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I hate to interrupt such good conversations, but perhaps there is something that is stirring in you that you'd like to share with the whole group, whether it's a comment, whether it's a question, observation, question. So please wait for the mic to come to you. Tell us who you are and a concise comment or question.

Participant: I agree with everything you said, but I have one question.

Sr. Reid: Oh, that's probably not a good idea. [laughter]

Participant: Well, I'm a fan for the day. Anyway . . .

Sr. Reid: You may change your mind, like I did.

Participant: I change a lot. But one of my questions that continues to worry me is, yes, men and women are together in this whole project of proclamation through the Scriptures and now, but they are not together in the traditional gendered language we continue to use for the image of God. So I would love to hear your comments about that. It's language—not just a political issue, which it is, but a theological issue.

Sr. Reid: Thank you. That's a very important issue, and really I wish I had another whole hour. In a nutshell, I think it's of critical importance. We are suffering from a crisis of imagination when the only thing we call God most of the time is Father. Lots of us, I know, people in this room, have experimented with all kinds of other ways of thinking of and speaking of and communicating with God. There's a lot of good biblical basis for doing that. There's all kinds of texts in Scripture that give us myriad images for God, and some of them are feminine, some of them are masculine.

It's really important that we begin expanding our imaginations and our use of language, because what we say about God is it says exactly what our relationship to God is, and so it matters. It's not just a nice thing: "Oh, well, if you want to call God Mother, that's just as good as calling God Father." Well, there's more to it than that. It's not just, "Well, everybody should do what they prefer." Yeah, in your own private prayer, sure. In our public prayer, though, in our prayer together, how will we address God?

What we say about God says about what we, how we understand our relationship to God. So if we only speak of and to God in our communal prayer with male language, then we are saying, whether we're intending it or not, what we're saying is that males are somehow more created in the image and likeness of God than females are, which is flatly contradicted by Genesis 1:26 and 27. That's a really critical way that I think Mary Magdalene would have us wanting to work at that, continuing to bring that, raise that consciousness and continuing to work at it. It's going to take a lot of work. It's going to take rewriting all of our communal prayers. It's going to take rewriting most of our hymns. It's going to take a shift in consciousness and imagination on all our parts.

I love the way that Sandra Schneiders put it in an article years ago when people were objecting that it was taking something away from God if you called God something other than Father. She says, "Oh, God is more than two men and a bird." [laughter] It's saying more about God, not less about God when we expand our images of God.

Participant: Thank you. Barbara, thanks so much for your stimulating presentation and for the magnificent visuals, which themselves were instances of proclamation, I think. Somebody at our table I think, said it best in relaying that your story and what you've shared with us is evidence of what happens when more and more meaning seems to unfurl as we stay faithful to the biblical text, that the layers and layers of meaning continue to unfold, so thank you for that.

Two quick questions. One, you put the Visitation scene on one side and the Resurrection Proclamation of Mary Magdalene on the other side. I wondered if you would say anything more about your juxtaposition of those two. And secondly—and choose one of these—the word in 24:10 that you referenced, *elegon*, the repeated telling. We have so many women in this room. I'm just wondering how you see that repeated telling manifest today, particularly in women, and what ongoing ways of manifestation you might recommend in our time.

Sr. Reid: Thank you. There's several important things that you raised. First of all, I'm glad you appreciated the visuals. That was on purpose, as I showed you just a few of the false images of Mary in some of our Christian art. I remarked at a lecture I gave at Fordham earlier this year—and Rita was present there, and now she's taken me literally. I remarked then that I wished that we could all go around to all the art museums of the world and do what we used to do during Lent, or maybe you still do it during Lent. Did you use to cover up the images with a purple cloth during Lent? It was supposed to be a kind of fasting of the eyes during Lent. Well, I proposed that we go around to all the art museums of the world and cover up all the mistaken images of Mary Magdalene that depict her in ways that are not true to what the Gospel says of her, and cover them up and replace them with good

art on Mary Magdalene. So I'm hoping to get those visual images of the good art into your mind's eye and let go of some of those ugly ones that are false.

But my juxtaposition of the Visitation and then the Empty Tomb scene in the proclamation was . . . I was trying to say visually what I was doing literally as I was revisiting the first two chapters and seeing both the verbal and the thematic links between the first two chapters and the last two chapters, which made me then rethink the overall impact of the message in that Gospel about women's prophetic proclamation. That was my reason of putting those two together.

The response to, "So how do women continue to proclaim?" I gave a few suggestions at the end, of the kinds of things that we need to say and to whom. But the ways in which we continue to preach the Word are as many as the people in this room. So whatever your gift is, whatever your way of proclaiming the Word, take every opportunity to do so, whether that is in speech or in action.

You know, I'm a Dominican. Could you tell from my emphasis on preaching the Word, how that draws my attention? I wish it was Dominic, but they say it's Francis who said, "Preach always, use words if necessary." So I think that we continue always; we're always proclaiming the Word in everything that we do, in every word we speak, in every action that we take. The ways in which we continue to do that is as many as there are people in this room. Discerning what is your particular way of doing that is important for each one.

Participant: Thank you. I have a question on the Magnificat. I've always loved that piece of writing, and I was studying the Gospel of Luke at church with a Bible group, and someone pointed out that, well, Luke was very poetic and a beautiful writer. Mary did not speak those words. That is really all from Luke. I felt so sad after that. Would you comment on the Magnificat?

Sr. Reid: Sure. It's impossible to know exactly who wrote each and every phrase and piece and part of it, but one of the things that people have long noticed is that what's in the Magnificat has very strong parallels with Hannah's Song of Praise. I have looked at it also as having very strong parallels to the Victory Hymn in Exodus 15, which some people think Moses sang, but I think that the last verse of it, where it says Miriam was leading the singing and the dancing, I think there's good reasons, and it's more detail than I can get into right now, but I think there are good reasons to attribute that canticle to Miriam.

What I see in the Magnificat is this is a song that . . . this was a canticle. We think the early Christians were singing this canticle in their gatherings. And where they get it from, well, they took the canticle from Exodus 15 and they took Hannah's canticle, and they wove pieces of that together and they adapted it for their situation now and on the lips of Mary to proclaim what God is doing in their midst now. It's an ancient hymn that faithful people have been singing this hymn all these years, and now in this new circumstance it takes a new twist.

Curiously, in some of the manuscripts of Luke's Gospel, it's on Elizabeth's lips and not Mary's. I don't think it was totally Luke's composition, because I think it's drawing on these other ancient hymns from the Old Testament. But that Luke had a hand in shaping it, yeah. And that they're singing it in the early Church—he says, "Ah, this goes great on Mary's lips right here," you know? [laughter] Same way with Simeon and Anna with their canticles, same way with Zechariah's Canticle. These are hymns that we think that they were singing in the early Church, and Luke wants to incorporate it in his work because it expresses well what's going on in the story here. Does that help?

Now whether Mary herself recited Miriam's song, Hannah's song—likely. Likely. That she shaped it this way, probably not so much.

Rita Houlihan: Thanks. So first, thank you very much. Sort of don't turn sideways. Thank you so much. It was wonderful. I just have two comments. One, this art, *Mary of Magdala Proclaims or Proclaiming,* is available in postcards and posters, and you can see me afterwards if you want to share it with students. A goal is to have young women and men experiencing Mary Magdalene standing, proclaiming.

The other thing is, on the names of God, there's a great confirmation program called "Giver of Life" by the Congregation of St. Joseph, the CSJs, and there's a chapter on the names of God coming from the Old Testament and the New Testament. It's like a quiz, a puzzle for kids, and it's fantastic, like mother hen, eagle, all the, well, many, many different names. So if anyone is teaching confirmation, that's a great asset. It's called "Giver of Life." Thank you.

Sr. Reid: That's great to know about these kinds of resources, because the younger we are when we learn these things, the more likely it is that we'll be open to exploring these kinds of avenues. Thank you. I think we're probably at time or . . . one last question.

Participant: I just wanted to thank you for going through the process and the fact that you changed your mind and that you went back and relooked at it. I think that's really important as a role model for all of us. Thank you so much for your honesty and your integrity for doing that. Thank you.

Sr. Reid: You're welcome.

[applause]