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SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY
Continuing Education Encore Events

Transcript of
"Mary Magdalene: Pieces of a Natural History"

presented on July 20, 2018 by
Dr. Francine Cardman

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Fr. Thomas Stegman, S.J.:

This year also marks the tenth anniversary of the School of Theology and Ministry, and as we celebrate this milestone throughout the 2018-2019 academic year, we are showcasing the excellence of the School of Theology and Ministry faculty, which brings me to introduce today's presenter, who is one of our own.

Francine Cardman is associate professor of historical theology and Church history at the School of Theology and Ministry. A native of Long Island, she holds a Master's degree and Ph.D. from Yale University. Prior to joining the faculty of Weston Jesuit School of Theology in 1979—I think she did that as a teenager—she taught at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Cardman's teaching and research focuses on early Christian ethics, the history of Christian spirituality, ministry and leadership in the early Church, and questions of gender, ministry, and justice in contemporary Church practice. Whether addressing contemporary or ancient issues, the common thread connecting all of her work is an historical approach that grounds theology, ethics, and ministry in their social, political, cultural, and ecclesial contexts.

Dr. Cardman has published a translation of Augustine's homilies on the Sermon on the Mount, as well as essays on Augustine; women's ministries and ordination in early Christianity; structures of governance and accountability in the Church; the development of early Christian ethics; and Vatican II and ecumenism.

A person who contributes both professionally and personally to the life of the Church, Dr. Cardman is a past president of the North American Academy of Ecumenists. She served on the Eastern Orthodox Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States. She has been a board member and vice president of NETWORK, the Catholic Social Justice Lobby, and she was a founding member and longtime board member of the Women's Theological Center in Boston during its nearly 20 years of programs in theology, ministry, anti-racism, and social justice work.

In a homily she preached for Catholic Women Preach last September, Dr. Cardman said, and I quote, "The Gospel calls us to look and listen beyond the pattern of this world's limitations of heart and imagination. It calls us not to leave the world and be free of its cares and needs, but to live here and now in the image of God's Reign," end quote. A

theologian and historian, teacher, scholar, and preacher, Francine Cardman does indeed live beyond the world's limitations in the image of God's Reign here and now, and in the spirit of Mary Magdalene. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Francine Cardman.

[APPLAUSE]

Dr. Francine Cardman:

Thank you for that gracious welcome, Tom. We've been colleagues for a long, long time. I may live beyond the limitations of the world occasionally, but right now I'm limited by sinus and ear problems, and so I would ask you to forbear with me. I'm hoping not to have any coughing fits.

I'd like to begin, then, in presenting this Mary Magdalene Lecture, whose title you can see, between this and the handout, I keep fiddling with, itself a work in progress and with its own natural history. I'd like to begin by thanking all of you for being here today to celebrate the Feast of Mary Magdalene in prayer, a common meal, and thinking together about this valiant woman and the ways in which she figures in our memory, imagination, and praxis: thinking about that in terms of past centuries as well as in our own, thinking about that in the present and in the future to which she witnesses.

Please let me thank, too, my faculty and administrative colleagues who've made it possible for me to share this festal time with you: Dean Thomas Stegman, Professor Jane Regan, and Melinda Donovan, direct-- what is your exact title, Melinda? [LAUGHTER] Melinda makes it all happen, and does it just with panache and grace. She even puts up with me. And then, of course, I want to thank Rita, our generous sponsor, who makes all this possible.

When I started thinking about this lecture, I had a large picture of what I thought I could do here in 45 or 50 minutes. That picture has gotten more and more focused, down to reality. And what I want to share with you this afternoon are some significant moments and directions in a natural history of Mary Magdalene.

I use the term because I want to put her in her context, in her world, and in ours. I want to look at some significant moments in how she has been seen and portrayed in Christian history and tradition. I want to look at the ways in which her image or projection suits particular times, places, pastoral, and spiritual needs. I will also attempt to offer some concluding reflections on who she is becoming and how she might be positioning us as we look forward toward our future as disciples of the Risen One.

I begin, then, with a brief reminder of biblical contexts and confusions regarding Mary Magdalene. The better part of the green sheet that you have at your tables lists them so you can follow along more easily. From there, we turn to look at some of the ways in which—I'm sorry. I then present two liturgical and homiletical portraits of Mary Magdalene as created by sixth century bishops from the East and from the West, from Antioch and from Rome. From there, we will turn to look at some of the ways in which the Western

representation of Mary Magdalene develops in preaching and devotion in the Middle Ages. By way of conclusion, I will attempt to make some connections and to relate these shifting mosaics of Mary Magdalene to our contemporary questions, appropriations, and possible futures.

After last year's spectacular slide show presentation of images of Mary Magdalene, I didn't even want to attempt a repeat. So these few slides I have here are simply for focus and contemplation. And periodically I'll shift them, I hope more or less following what I'm talking about. They're just there to keep centered.

As we all recognize, Mary Magdalene is best known to us and most likely draws most of us together here today in her biblical and post-biblical role as *apostola apostolorum*, to which I will return later in this talk. Right now, I simply want to set before us the clearest and only extensive expression of this role, which is found in John's Gospel, chapter 20, verses 1 to 18, so noted on your green sheet. It may be central in most of our imaginations and in our motivations for thinking and walking with Mary Magdalene.

In that passage from John, as we heard today at the liturgy, Mary Magdalene remains at the tomb after the other disciples and followers have left. Even Simon Peter and John have left, who had raced each other to the tomb in typical male competitive fashion, having been alerted by Mary that it was empty. She then encounters the angel and the presumed gardener, both of whom ask why she is weeping. She recognizes Jesus when he says her name, calling her by name rather than by the generic address of "woman." He calls her and he sends her to proclaim to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord."

But who is this woman who first appears at the Cross in three of the Gospels? She heads the list of women disciples from Galilee who followed Jesus and ministered to him in his preaching of the Kingdom and his journeys to Jerusalem, to death, and to resurrection. Luke moves his list of these women forward to a point early in his Gospel, and he makes and regards Mary Magdalene as Jesus's benefactor and also his beneficiary. She is the woman from whom he had cast out seven demons in those short three verses from Luke eight.

But Christian believers have wanted more than these mere tidbits. They wanted the back story. They wanted more narrative. They wanted a bigger picture. And so they have searched for details among the other Marys and anonymous women in the Gospel, details that would help them construct her story. Mary Magdalene was and is a real person, but Mary Magdalene is also a construction of our imaginations, our needs, and our spiritualities. She is a messenger of the Gospel and shaped by it, but how we perceive her also shapes how we perceive the Gospel and how we live the life it calls us to.

What did they find, these early believers who searched for Mary's back story? They found, as we know, in the narrative of the last week of Jesus's life, an unnamed woman who acted like a prophet at a dinner party in the house-- or at a dinner, at least-- in the house of Simon the Leper, breaking open her alabaster jar of perfume and anointing Jesus's head with precious ointment.

First, let's think of her or visualize her as *apostola apostolorum*, and in a moment as a woman anointing Jesus. Some who were present at that dinner that night judged her to be wasteful of money that would be better spent on the poor. They found Mary of Bethany, who with her sister Martha hosts a dinner to celebrate Jesus's raising of their brother Lazarus. Mary makes an ointment of precious perfume and nard to anoint his feet, wiping away the excess with her hair. Judas complains of the waste in these gestures.

And they found another anonymous woman, a woman of the city who was a sinner, who crashes dinner parties at the house of Simon the Pharisee and washes the feet of Jesus with her tears, dries them with her hair, and anoints them. Jesus forgave her many sins because she has shown great love. Keep all these pieces of the Magdalene mosaic together as we fit in the final tesserae from the additions to Mark and John's Gospels. The appendix to Mark combines material from John and Luke. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, who has oddly been identified as from the one whom he had cast out seven demons.

And finally, looking for Mary's story, they found the unnamed adulterous woman whom Jesus refuses to condemn when she is brought before him. All of them named and unnamed, anointing his head or his feet, following him, ministering to him. All of these women were drafted into the task of constructing a life of Mary Magdalene.

The resulting mosaic—shifting images once again—shifts form and foci according to the interpreter narrating her story, portraying her person, or preaching her spiritual and moral meaning. She easily becomes a sounding board and a sign for her many times and ages. In a very contemporary analogy, she is a Rorschach test for our understanding of the Gospel, for our understanding of the Church, for our understanding of the ministries of women, for what the Reign of God looks like.

The Gospels have given us a confusing, and at times conflicting, reflections of Mary Magdalene, in herself, among the other Marys and unnamed women following Jesus, and in relation to Jesus and the male disciples. Works of the third century that came to be regarded as extracanonical, particularly the Gospel of Mary and the Gospel of Thomas, reveal the rivalry and resentment evoked in Peter and the other apostles by Jesus's love for Mary, by the secret teachings she received, and by her consequent superior knowledge and authority. Their protests ring true to our 21st century ears.

Who is this woman? Has he chosen her above us? Should we listen to her? Who does she think she is?

The tension reflected in these writings may explain why they lacked influence in later centuries of the Church. But the third century does offer a source who defines aspects of the later tradition. Hippolytus, who was a teacher and theologian in Rome at that time, whose biography and most of his writings are only sketchily known and much debated. This third century source offers us nicely three contributions in his works. Three contributions that are clear and bear out our understanding, or help fill out our understanding, of Mary Magdalene.

First, he identifies her with Mary of Bethany and with her sister Martha, her companion in ministry. He regarded them as both apostles to or of the apostles. So in a commentary that

Hippolytus writes on the Song of Songs, he sees Mary and Martha of Bethany together as apostles to the apostles.

Second, he sees in Mary Magdalene, as she searched at the tomb before dawn seeking for the body of the Lord, he sees in her the bride of the Song of Songs who searches through the city by night, seeking out the one her soul loves, as we heard today again in the readings. Like another Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene becomes for Hippolytus a type or symbol of the Church.

And more surprisingly, she becomes a second Eve who undoes the damage of the first woman's sin, who speaks the truth, not deception, who hears obediently, who makes good the failures of the ancient Eve. Usually, the new Eve is regarded as Mary in later tradition, as Mary the mother of Jesus. Here it is Mary Magdalene.

Third, Hippolytus salutes the *myrrophorai*, the myrrh-bearers who bring perfumed ointment to anoint Jesus's body, whether they are several women, two women, or only one, Mary Magdalene, they are the apostle or apostles to the apostles, the first witness or witnesses to the Resurrection, the ones who first proclaim Jesus risen from the dead. Their images still trace across the heavens in Eastern Christianity today. They can be seen today alongside a different Western trajectory which reached well into the 20th and 21st century, even as a newer—or rather an older—narrative has re-emerged in the Feast of Mary Magdalene that Catholics celebrate here today in the wider Church on July 22.

I will return to that celebration at the end of this presentation. Now, however, I want to call our attention to two examples of Eastern and Western interpretations of the Magdalene in the sixth century. A time of change in the Roman Empire, both East and in the West, and especially in the West.

Although they are from the same time, they mark out divergent narrative paths through two millennia of Christian history, paths still taken today, paths that still guide our imagination and our devotion to Mary Magdalene. I start with the less familiar one, an Easter homily or an Easter season homily from Gregory, the Bishop of Antioch, or the Patriarch of Antioch, as the bishops of the five most important sees of early Christianity were called by then. This Gregory's long Easter sermon on the bearers of the ointment is an evocation and exposition of Jesus's death and resurrection.

Cast in almost poetic and repetitive prose—it's prose that is also poetry—in an evocation that focus intensely on his divine flesh, on the body in the tomb, on the Jews' attempts to bar the tomb and prevent his escape. His focus on the women who watch and wait and later return with precious ointment, seeking to anoint his body. And he focuses, too, on the angel and his message, the invitation to his hearers, the invitation to us to come and see the place.

And here I quote from the sermon: "Come see the place where the Lord lay. Come and see the place where the devil received the deadly blow. Come see the place where the symbols of your resurrection were written. Come see the place where death lay as a corpse." And a little further on, "Come see the place more enjoyable than the whole of paradise. Come see

the place more glorious than any bridal chamber. Come see the dumb tomb that loudly sings the power of him who was buried there."

At this point in the sermon, the angel concludes with an admonition. "See that you do not hide the wonder by keeping silent." The women then run to the tomb, together rather than competitively— [LAUGHTER]—where they encounter the Lord bodily present before them. Jesus reveals to them all that his resurrection has accomplished reversing the sin and death of humankind in Eve and Adam, recalling for us Hippolytus's similar use of Eve—pardon me—of Mary, comparison of Mary with Eve.

Jesus reveals to them the death of humankind that renews human nature and restores and establishes firmly its capacity for immortality. He urges the women to be joyful, to dance, to rejoice, and to feast. And he commissions them, sending them out:

> Go, tell my disciples. See that I bear not hate, but loving kindness. I call them brothers who left me alone at the moment of the Crucifixion. I know how to be generous when I am violated. I know how to bear it when I am treated ungratefully. I know how to be lenient for the weakness of my friend. I know how to show compassion to those who sin and weep about it. Go, tell my brothers that they must go to Calvary and that they will see me there. Tell my disciples the mysteries that you have seen. Be the first teachers of the teachers. Let Peter, who has denied me, learn that I can also ordain or make women to be apostles.

That is what the Lord said to the women.

This wonderful narration so typical, characteristic, so filled with the Orthodox ethos and spirituality, with their understanding of humanity, of creation, of sin, and of salvation. This wonderful narration is not without its problematic parts, of course. And most notably so in regard to its treatment of the Jews. Nor does it automatically translate into ecclesial structures and practices. Though the Eastern churches still honor the myrrh-bearers on the second Sunday after Easter, and they have a long history of women deacons throughout the Byzantine Empire, and some would argue, continuously to the present day.

The Greek Orthodox Church around the world has been discussing the restoration of women deacons for two decades now. They move slowly, but eventually their mills grind fine. But they are talking about it. There is a movement. There is official participation of bishops at consultations in Rhodes, in Geneva, and elsewhere, in the United States. There is a strong movement here at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological School in Brookline.

Last year, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt ordained women deacons for the Orthodox Church in Congo in February, 2017, and has stated that he intends to extend this restoration of the female diaconate for the mission of the church in Egypt in order to tell his brothers and sisters what Mary Magdalene had seen. Of course there has been a mixed reception and there is ongoing debate, but the historical precedents are undeniable, and the myrrh-bearing women speak in witness as well.

Preparing this lecture was the first time I myself encountered this marvelous sermon. It's something that I will read regularly in every Easter season.

The other sixth century bishop is also named Gregory. Gregory the Great, the Bishop of Rome, Pope as he exercises his office in a way we recognize today as papal. But a man who was surprisingly un-self-aggrandizing. The Latin Bishop Gregory was bishop at the end of the sixth century, a time of turmoil and transition tinged with apocalyptic anxieties in the last years of the declining Western Roman Empire.

You may not necessarily enjoy history lessons, but for me this is a good one, an especially good one. As bishop, Gregory understood his pastoral responsibilities to include care for the people and city of Rome, as well as for the faith and salvation of his parishioners. Even expecting the end to be soon, he recognized and made arrangements for people's material needs to be met, their bodies to be healed, to be touched, to be made whole. He preached frequently and wrote voluminously, leaving thousands and thousands of letters, many scriptural commentaries, 500 pages plus of commentary on morality in his work on Job, and also writing about ways to form and reform clergy for service, for ministry, for pastoral care and spiritual direction rather than for secular advancement and positions of power in a time when power was up for grabs and where priesthood was a route of upward mobility.

It is to Gregory we owe the origins of the composite portrait of Mary Magdalene so familiar to Western Christians before and even after Vatican II. His portrait of Mary Magdalene, the repentant sinner of Luke 7 whom he believes to be the same Mary from whom seven demons had been cast out, as well as the same Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus who anointed his feet during a dinner at their house. Gregory brings all these associations and Marys together in his Homily 33 on Luke 7:36-50, the Anointing at Simon the Pharisee's House, a homily that has recently gained notoriety among feminist students of this period for its effacement of the real Mary Magdalene, a claim to which we will return later.

And so I want to tell you about some of his homily. It's not as poetic, it's not as rhythmic, it's not as corporeal, in a sense, as Gregory of Antioch's homily. But it is important.

From the beginning of the homily. Mary Magdalene's repentance is at the center of Gregory's attention. "When I think of Mary's repentance," he says, "I am more inclined to weep than to speak." He sees her as a great sinner, symbolized by the seven demons who in turn represent the totality of all vices. He emphasizes her boldness in running to the fountain of mercy to be washed clean. He notes with astonishment both her turning to Jesus and his mercy and gentleness in receiving her.

But Gregory looks askance at the alabaster flask that would later become a feature of Mary Magdalene's iconography, before our eyes still, suggestively regarding it as the source of scent for her own body and its illicit deeds. "What she used disgracefully," he writes, "for herself, she now laudably offered for the Lord."

For an ascetic bishop who had been a monk before his elevation to the papacy, Gregory's imagination approaches a feverish pitch [LAUGHTER] more often associated with the

writings of St. Jerome. [LAUGHTER] He writes, "Her eyes—" sorry. Feverish enough to make my throat dry. [LAUGHTER] "Her eyes had sought earthly things. Now chastising them through repentance, she wept. She had used her hair to beautify her face. Now she used it to wipe away her tears. She had spoken proudly with her mouth, but in kissing the Lord's feet she fixed it to the footsteps of her Redeemer. She converted the number of her faults into the number of virtues so she could serve God as completely in repentance as she had rejected him in sin."

This is so typically a Western frame of mind. Western and Roman. The rest of the homily is considerably more recollected in tone, as Gregory pieces together the Gospel text he draws on from his extensive study of the Scriptures and his inherited cultural assumptions about women and men. I'm sorry. This sentence does not make any sense. [LAUGHTER]

Gregory pieces together Gospel text he draws on from his extensive study of the Scriptures and his inherited cultural assumptions about women and men. He comes to the Scriptures with cultural presuppositions, as do we all. It is from these sources that he constructs the woman he understands to be Mary Magdalene, a repentant prostitute, a great sinner. In doing so—unwittingly, I think—he sets the context for later Western believers and preachers to perceive her likewise. In evaluating his homily and its impact, however, you must also take note of its clear and strong message about Mary Magdalene's great love and Jesus's great mercy.

For a more complete picture of Gregory's Magdalene, however, we need to turn to another homily: Homily 25 on John 11 to 18. Finally. The recognition scene in the garden near the tomb. Gregory again starts from the woman who had been a sinner in the city, as Luke writes, and recounts the narrative of John. Mary comes to the tomb out of love. Failing to find Jesus's body, she reports its absence to the disciples who came, saw, did not conquer, and left again.

But Mary remained weeping. "So it happened," Gregory writes, "that she who stayed behind—" as Jane has pointed out to us in her reflections today, "—that she who stayed behind to seek him was the only one who saw him. She is like the bride in the Song of Songs seeking the one her soul loves. Moved by love, she looks again into the tomb and is met by the two angels seated at the head and foot of the mercy seat," as Gregory calls it.

"Again she asks for the body of the Lord." At this point though, Gregory oddly interprets her continued seeking as doubt about the Resurrection, when John, in speaking about Peter and John, as we heard today, only attributes a misunderstanding of the Scriptures as the reason for their departure from the tomb.

He sees, then, her doubt about the Resurrection, a doubt that prevents her from recognizing Jesus. Her love revealed him to her, and her doubt prevented her from knowing him. Immediately, however-- and to his small credit, at least-- Gregory expresses his own doubt about the degree of Mary's mistakenness in thinking that Jesus was the gardener.

"Was he not spiritually a gardener for her," he asks, "when he planted the seeds of virtue in her heart by the force of his love?" Gregory is always able to find a spiritual meaning that

rescues difficult texts. [LAUGHTER] "Was he not spiritually a gardener for her?" When Jesus calls her by name, she of course recognizes him at once.

Gregory dismisses the idea that Jesus's *noli me tangere* that comes down to us in the Latin Bible, was a refusal of Jesus to be touched by women after the Resurrection, a surprising acknowledgment given some of what we've heard and seen through his eyes. Rather, he says what Jesus says, "because he had not yet ascended to the Father."

I have never understood really what that meant; why that is an answer to why she shouldn't touch him. It makes more sense translated from the Greek. "Do not cling to me." Why, if we had stuck with that?

Gregory acknowledges Jesus's sending of Mary to his brothers and her proclamation to the disciples that she has seen the Lord. And reminiscent again of Hippolytus, and even, surprisingly, Augustine, he sees Mary Magdalene as the New Eve. This is something we have lost entirely from our traditions, I think, both East and West.

He writes, "See how the sin of the human race was removed where it began. In Paradise, a woman was the cause of death for a man. Coming from the sepulcher, a woman proclaimed life to men." What can I say? "Mary related the words of the one who restored her to life; Eve related the words of the serpent who brought death."

Gregory concludes the sermon by acknowledging Mary Magdalene as a witness of the divine mercy. Through her love and active seeking for Jesus, it was she who brought the message to his apostles who were themselves his messengers. Not exactly the *apostola apostolorum*, but neither is she simply a repentant prostitute. "We should imitate this Mary Magdalene," he says, "as an example of the divine mercy. And we too should drink from the bountiful breasts of the loving-kindness of God."

As Gregory read and harmonized the Gospels and their many Marys, did he intentionally efface the identity of Mary Magdalene in order to deny her apostolic authority? Could he have anticipated that his composite portrait of her would take hold so dominantly in the West, or that his writings would be so influential in the emergence of Western Christendom in the Middle Ages? Admittedly, that seems not very likely. Yet hold sway they did.

This is a very old image of Gregory writing. I want now to briefly just mention some few moments or perspectives from later medieval Christianity, continuities with Gregory's picture, continuities that are surprising with Gregory of Antioch's picture. Lacking historical sources, Christian writers in the centuries after Gregory's death began to supply Mary Magdalene's biography as desired, outfitting her with social status, many properties, sins of vanity and luxury that were elaborated in great detail, sins that led to sexual sins, and ultimately repentance, conversion, even lifelong penance.

Gregory's model of Mary Magdalene, overall, is a model of the penitent Mary, a model of repentance, a model of even a funny kind of contemplation, that repentance can allow, that can make room for in one's life. The 13th century collection of saints' lives, legends, and miracles known as the *Legenda Aurea*, or the Golden Legend, produced what became a

standard narrative of her sanctity. Her cult grew rapidly in France, which according to a legend, Mary Magdalene and her companions had reached by a miraculous sea voyage in a ship without rudder or pilot, tossed away by pagans who despised them.

There, she preached and evangelized the pagans in Marseille, settling in Provence after converting the local populace. There are pictures of her preaching, preaching in a pulpit. There are reliefs of her preaching to audiences. There are many memories in manuscript illustrations and other artistic media of Mary Magdalene preaching in France. Shrines rose up in Provence and later in Burgundy, competing for her relics, stealing her bones back and forth, certifying them, de-certifying them, and putting them to use for their patronage, the political legitimation they offer, and the pilgrimage traffic they engender.

In a wonderful, long, detailed study of *The Making of Mary Magdalene: Preaching and Devotion in the Later Middle Ages*—it's on the green handout—Katherine Ludwig Jansen details the continued growth and embellishment of the lives of Mary Magdalene in the West and the rapidly expanding repertoire of visual images and spiritual practices modeled on her many likenesses and meanings. If you want to know more about Mary Magdalene's life, write it. [LAUGHTER]

And that's what they did in this period. These writings, whether devotional works, whether poetry, whether dramas of various sorts, even liturgical actions, these many, many, many lives of Mary Magdalene proliferated throughout the 12th through the 15th centuries.

One of the things that Jansen makes clear in this book and in a related essay—and that surprised me no end—was how widespread, how public, how important preaching of and devotion to Mary Magdalene as *apostola apostolorum* was throughout the later Middle Ages in the West. Something we seldom hear about. We think it's only the easterners who kept this alive. But no, it's a fixture of late medieval piety. Why has it disappeared from our radar?

Everywhere in devotional poetry, dramas, literature, frescoes, paintings, reliefs, she is pictured as preaching and blessing. She's often crowned with golden aureoles. Even the liturgy in this period reflected her apostolic title. At her Mass, the Credo was recited, something that theologians and liturgists seriously recommended in this period, but which otherwise were reserved to feasts of the Lord, of the Virgin Mary, and of the apostles.

In religious houses of nuns and canonesses, the antiphon "O *apostola apostolorum*" was sung in the Divine Office daily. I have searched and I have searched, and searched almost as hard as Mary Magdalene for Jesus's body, for the text of this antiphon. I have driven John Baldovin crazy asking about antiphonaries and other liturgical texts from this period. But so far I don't know where someone has laid it. [LAUGHTER]

By the time of the Reformation, however, the memory of Mary Magdalene as apostle and preacher was beginning to fray and wear thin, increasingly pushed into the shadows cast by movements of lay preachers dimmed—deemed—dimmed as well—but deemed schismatic or heretical. Ironically, it was further hemmed in by the regularization of parish preaching as required by the Council of Trent.

Alongside this diminishing apostolic Mary Magdalene, the image of the repentant sinner and reformed prostitute held its own, assimilating over time with the fourth century story of Mary of Egypt, a prostitute herself at, of all places, the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, who did penance in the desert for 47 years, living on two and a half loaves of bread for the first 30 years, and on the Word of God from then until her death. [LAUGHTER]

Gregory's penitential Magdalene melded well with the increasing number of penitential associations and confraternities in cities, and the growing emphasis on sacramental confession after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

This is my favorite picture. This is a wood carved altarpiece from Germany in the 1400s, of Mary Magdalene who—of course, once she did penance like Mary of Egypt and the bread ran out and the clothes she was wearing just rotted away—covered herself with her long hair and apparently grew hair all over her body in her ongoing pursuit of penitence.

This is Mary Magdalene, then, who was thought to have been raised up into the air at each canonical hour of the day to be nourished by the angels. And yet at the same time, not only in the ways in which the title and the devotion to Mary the *Apostola Apostolorum* that I just spoke about before was exercised, at the same time there were ongoing discussions among the scholastic theologians of the period, with a surprising number of them arguing strongly in favor of the ability of women to teach and to preach. We don't hear much about them either, in our history of this period.

But their number was many. Their voices were strong. There were debates, of course, from the other side. But it's important to realize how seriously these scholastic theologians took that possibility, and how quickly we lost sight and sound of them as we moved into the period of the Reformation, the Catholic reformations, and modernity.

These theologians and particularly the Dominicans were fond of Mary Magdalene as the *Apostola Apostolorum*. And with the support of Dominicans, theologians, and pastors, we end up in the later Middle Ages with a Mary Magdalene who looks very much like a Dominican mendicant preacher. [LAUGHTER]

There are other possibilities for women in this period that emerge as well. One very interesting one is represented in the story of Peter Abelard and Heloise, which I don't have time to go into now. Something you must have learned somewhere in high school or college, Western history courses of some sort or other. A monk and a nun who engaged in an illicit sexual relationship, married illicitly, had a child and so on, and then did penance in their separate monasteries for the rest of their lives.

What's interesting here is that the monastery of the Paraclete that was established for Heloise was the recipient of—I had no idea—many hymns written by Peter Abelard. Mary Magdalene was a special figure in their liturgies, in his hymns, and in the life of the monastery. So that there's a continuation of the teaching and the liturgical office, if you wish, of Mary Magdalene in Heloise's monastery. Something, again, that we don't pay much attention to.

By way of conclusion—because we're running out of time and I've talked too long—I want to say three relatively simple things, or make three relatively simple connections.

How did we get from Gregory the Great's composite Mary Magdalene and his dominant spirituality, his dominant model of her as a penitent, despite thriving models and practices of spirituality that regarded her as *apostola apostolorum* in an important large segment of the later Middle Ages? How did we get from there to here?

Another thing that I looked for almost as hard as I looked for the "O, *apostola apostolorum*" antiphon was something that was mentioned as Paul VI's declaration that Gregory the Great's composite Magdalene was the wrong picture. I looked for apostolic letters, exhortations. I looked through endless stuff from the Office of Divine Worship. I looked and looked and looked and looked.

Well, what did he do? He didn't write anything. All he did was change the reading for her feast. He put away the Sinful Woman reading of Luke 7, and he reinstated the John 20 reading. So all we see is the change in the Lectionary, and how powerful it was. No condemnations. No declarations. No CDF. Just a change of Scripture readings and a return to tradition. I was overwhelmed by that conclusion.

And from there, we have not only new readings but a feast with its very own collect, a double feast, and so on. A feast that preempts other feasts of the day, except for a Feast of the Lord.

Second, in the way in which Mary Magdalene is portrayed as a repentant prostitute, a great sexual sinner, we can see the way in which down through the centuries she has continued to function as a kind of lightning rod for discontent, suspicion, and critique of Catholic sexual teachings. So Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* was as popular as it was because it tapped into that suspicion and that need.

The Gospel of Mary, when it was discovered, was also a lightning rod for some of that same discontent. And we need to think more about the issues of sexuality and authority in the Church because of a history of such suspicion and because of authoritarianism and absolutism of many teachings as they are presented, but not necessarily need to be in the Church today. So the lightning rod of sexuality draws so much of these reflections on Mary Magdalene together.

And finally, in thinking about Mary Magdalene again today as the *Apostola Apostolorum*, and thinking about the ministries of women in the Church, there are discussions that we need to have more often, more continuously, more openly about those ministries, about women's evangelizing and apostolic mission. There's a commission discussing deacons. Everything about it is secret, even the dates of its meetings. And there is no word of any planned report from it.

But in these discussions about this issue of women's ministries and the restoration of women to the diaconate in particular, we also need to keep in mind that ministry is for mission. We have to keep in mind that *diakonia* is what that ministry is about. It's about the

myrrh-bearers and their ministry of mercy. It's about discipleship and about apostolicity, the apostolicity that adheres in every baptized Christian's life.

But this is still an issue that needs discussion. In addressing some of these issues, Mary Magdalene can be opening a way for us toward a different, more historical, more genuinely, perhaps, apostolic Church and ministry, spirituality, for our times. Thank you, and I'll stop with that. [APPLAUSE]

[MUSIC PLAYING]