

# THE MAGDALENE

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**From the Desk of Fr.  
Neil...**

## **ARE WE TO BE LIKE MARY OR MARTHA?**

In Luke 10:38-42 we find this short but instructive passage. Jesus enters the house of Martha. Martha has a sister named Mary, (not Jesus' mother). There is not a lot of detail regarding timing, but it seems that it was not long after Jesus arrives that Mary is found sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to him teaching, and Martha, it appears, is busy taking care of preparing for Jesus' visit. The ESV (English Standard Version) says, "But Martha was distracted with much serving."

Martha at some point says to Jesus, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me." Jesus answers, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

Many people read this passage today and conclude that Mary was doing the right thing by not helping Martha serve and Martha was wrong by not sitting at Jesus' feet listening to his teaching. Some will take this even further and wrongly use this passage as a reason or an excuse for not working either in the home or even not helping with Church activities.

On the other hand, others distort this passage to say that it is Jesus teaching the value of what is called a "Contemplative life" or even a monastic life.

First, it should be obvious that only praying and reading the Bible and reading theological literature and doing nothing else is not what this passage is teaching us. It is not teaching us that housework or preparing for company by getting the house in order and serving is wrong either. Nor does it teach us that we should just let people into our homes no matter how messy the home is. (Sorry to those who think this is a way of getting out of domestic chores like cooking and cleaning).

We must first remember that this is Jesus in the house of Martha. His time on earth was not only unique, but limited. He of course deserves our unending attention, but we aren't entertaining Jesus in our homes when someone comes over or we have party or even when we set up for an event at church. Jesus doesn't visit our homes today. In other words we can fall into the trap of trying to apply the "What Would Jesus Do?" method here, but this passage is not primarily about domestic chores nor is it primarily about the contemplative life.

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 Rev. Fr. Neil Edlin, Rector

**Sunday Services:**  
 8am Mass  
 10am Choral Mass &  
 Children's Sunday School

**Wednesday Service &  
 Anointing of the Sick: 9am**

So first to Martha. Martha makes two mistakes by her behavior. Though she is being a very attentive hostess, Jesus points out two faults. First, Martha has taken her activity beyond a reasonable level. "...Christ would rather have chosen to be entertained in a frugal manner, and at moderate expense, than that the holy woman should have submitted to much toil." This takes us to the previous comment I made above. Jesus was a unique guest. His demands were low when it came to earthly things. He came to call people unto himself. This is not the same as the guests that come to our homes. Jesus had a specific message and limited time. This takes us to the second fault of Martha. She was so distracted by her preparations that her attention was diverted. She was not only doing more than was necessary but she was doing things that caused her to miss out on the more important visit by Jesus to her home. By doing so, she actually "deprived herself of the advantage of Christ's visit." Jesus' visit was to offer important and life-giving teaching.

Mary, on the other hand, chose to first sit with Jesus and hear what he had to say when he entered the house. To go much beyond this and make certain applications can have the potential to lead us astray. Jesus, by replying as he did, was not using Mary's actions to direct us to a monastic life or even a life of contemplation. He is not commending us sitting around all day learning from Jesus through our Bibles.

These are all good and important practices but if we were to do only that, we could become guilty of neglecting our calling as Christians to serve one another.

There is no comparison here. By saying, to Martha, "You are anxious and troubled about many things and Mary has chosen the good portion," Jesus is teaching us that Mary is engaged – in this case – in a holy and profitable thing. She should not be disturbed. One commentator notes that Jesus is saying, "You

would have a good right, to blame your sister, if she indulged in ease, or gave herself up to trifling occupations, or aimed at something unsuitable to her station, and left to you the whole charge of the household affairs. But now, when she is properly and usefully employed in hearing, it would be an act of injustice to withdraw her from it; for an opportunity so favorable is not always in her power."<sup>1</sup>

This again points us to the fact that Jesus was not telling Martha not to prepare the house because that sort of work was irrelevant. He was saying that his presence was more important than anything and it was not going to last forever in this form. Mary was taking advantage of the presence of Jesus and what he had to say. Martha was missing an opportunity.

To take this passage too literally can cause us to lose sight of the fact that there is a time to hear and there is a time to act. There are plenty of other passages in scripture, both in the Old and the New Testaments that call us to action. Christians are to be busy in many things according to our gifts. Action in the Christian life is always spurred on, however, by the message that the gospel brings. The gospel tells us that the "real" work of perfect obedience to God's Law has been done by Christ and that learning of him is of utmost importance. Yet as we learn of him, we are taught the great importance of our works that we are to be doing in service to our neighbors.

The account of Jesus' visit to Mary and Martha should not be first taken to be a life application passage. Rather it is a real event in the life of Jesus. It is one that we can certainly relate to. But it is also one that will never happen again. We should rather turn our attention to serving our neighbors and family in Christ-like service.

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Vol. 2, pp. 143–144). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

## **LENT, POSSIBLY THE MOST MISUNDERSTOOD ELEMENT OF THE CHURCH YEAR**

From Advent, to Christmas, to Christmastide, Epiphany, to Pre-Lent, into the Lenten season we are, at the same time, experiencing one of the most underappreciated elements of Christianity and the movement of the theology of the Church – the Church Calendar.

With Advent we have the beginning of the Christian year, the anticipation of all that is to follow. As we have recently seen, we have moved out of Epiphany, the revelation of Jesus Christ to a fallen world, into the Lenten season.

If the Church Calendar is underappreciated in how it teaches us the theology of the Church, Lent is possibly the most misunderstood element of the Church year – both by Anglicans (and those of a liturgical tradition) and non-Anglicans alike.

This is due to a number of factors, the primary one being how the Roman Church has understood this time of the Church year. For Rome, this is a time for its faithful to participate in the Sacrament of Penance. The Sacrament of Penance for the Roman Church contains three elements in which the faithful are responsible; the fourth is the responsibility of the Priest (absolution).

In Penance the Roman parishioner is to participate in contrition, confession, and satisfaction. What is of consequence for us is the last element – satisfaction. This last element of Penance is the difference between us and our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters.

The Protestant Reformers, much to the surprise of many, actually had no issues with the first two elements of Penance. After all, isn't it a good thing to be contrite for our sins and to confess them? The difficulty becomes what to

do after that? Ok, you're sorry for your sin and you confess your sin, but how do you alleviate the guilt of your sin?

For the Roman, it is in acts of satisfaction. In other words, once you've accomplished the first two, you have to "do" something to satisfy the demands of God's righteousness to truly experience the benefits of Penance and receive absolution.

For us, only the sacrifice of Christ can satisfy the demands of God's righteousness. For us, Penance isn't a means of justifying us before God. It is God's gracious and generous gift to us for our sanctification.

It is during the Lenten season where we, as Fr. Neil has recently told us, "Put to death" the lusts and sins of the flesh. It is in the Lenten season where we are mortifying the flesh. Yes, we are to do this daily during our lives, but the Lenten season offers us the time of concentrated, devout, and serious reflection on our sinfulness and Christ's gracious forgiveness.

So as we begin our Lenten season, let us use this time to devote ourselves to the holiness to which we are called by our Savior and thereby allowing us to truly anticipate – with a clean, clear conscience – that Greatest of all periods of the Church Calendar, EASTER!

**Fr. Paul Castellano, UECNA**



## ORDO CALENDAR ACTIVITIES

### COMMEMORATING 40 HOLY MARTYRS ON MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup>

In the year 313 Saint Constantine the Great issued an edict granting Christians religious freedom, and officially recognizing Christianity as equal with paganism under the law. But his co-ruler Licinius was a pagan, and he decided to stamp out Christianity in his part of the Empire. As Licinius prepared his army to fight Constantine, he decided to remove Christians from his army, fearing mutiny. The earliest written account of the martyrdom of the Forty Holy Martyrs is documented around 370-379. In the Armenian city of Sebaste, a military commander named Agricola, had a company of forty Cappadocian soldiers who had distinguished themselves in many battles. When these Christian soldiers refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, Agricola locked them up in prison. The soldiers prayed through the night. Then they heard a voice saying, "Persevere until the end, then you shall be saved." Put to trial, these soldiers said, "Take not only our military insignia, but also our lives, since nothing is more precious to us than Christ God." They were condemned by the Prefect to be exposed naked upon a frozen pond on a bitterly cold night that they might freeze to death. Among the confessors, one yielded to the temptation of a bathhouse set up near the pond by the Prefect but died when he stepped on the ground. At this moment, one of the guards set to keep watch, beheld a supernatural brilliancy overshadowing them and at once proclaimed himself a Christian, threw off his garments, and joined the remaining thirty-nine. Thus the number of forty remained complete. At daybreak, the stiffened bodies of the confessors were burned and the

ashes cast into a river. It is speculated that Christians, however, collected the relics and buried them with honor.

Read John 11:25 and Psalm 119:153-168

## CURRENT EVENTS

*A Journey Through Lent*

### TUESDAY MEATLESS SUPPERS

Looking for support and a little fellowship during Lent? Come to our simple Meatless Suppers. Bring your friends and family. It's free. **Suppers begin on February 20th at 6:30pm.**

If you would like to volunteer to cook a meatless meal, please sign-up on the Volunteer Sheets in the Narthex or contact Karen Carlson. This is not a potluck and no desserts will be served.

### LENTEN PROGRAM

Father Neil will be conducting a **Lenten Program on Tuesday evenings at 7:00pm** following our Meatless Supper where we pray at the **Stations of the Cross** in commemoration of Christ's walk down the Via Dolorosa to His crucifixion or participate in **Family Evening Prayer**.

**Please check the "Calendar At A Glance" for more details.**

### ARE WE OFF THE HOOK FOR FASTING?

**Are we off the hook for fasting?** Below are a couple of bible verses that will provide you with some insight to this question.

*EZRA 8:21 "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before*

our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods."

DANIEL 9:3 "Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes."

ISAIAH 58:3 "Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it? Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers."

ACTS 14:23 "And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed."

MATTHEW 9:14-15 "Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

**Fr. Neil will be collecting your thoughts in a receptacle in the church lobby. Watch for his answer to this Lenten question.**

### **PALM PROCESSION ANNOUNCING THE KING'S ARRIVAL**

The gathering of Christ's followers in the church breezeway with Palms waving high will begin at **10:00am Sunday on March 25<sup>th</sup>**. The Choir will lead us in a hymn as we process into the Church, commemorating the Triumphal Entry of Christ into the City of David while the people waved palm branches and strewed cloaks in His path. This ceremony marks the beginning of the Passion of Jesus Christ on His way to the Cross. All of this was His way of fulfilling the Prophet Zechariah's prophecy.

*"Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem! Look, your King is*

*coming to you; He is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."* (Zech 9:9)

### **MAUNDY THURSDAY COMMENORATES THE LAST SUPPER**

On **March 29<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**, come celebrate Jesus' last supper with his Apostles in the Upper Room. At that time Jesus gave His disciples some final instructions, "Love one another as I have loved you", and He washed their feet. This service is an important Holy Week service and your attendance is needed.

This somber ceremony of foot washing, participation in the stripping of the Altar and the placing of the Blessed Sacraments on the Altar of Repose as the lights dim all point us to the final night in which Jesus was betrayed, left alone in the Garden of Gethsemane, arrested and tried. This night is both humbling and spiritually moving.

### **GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE**

**Good Friday Service** marks the time Jesus is hung on the Cross, died, was taken down and entombed. Beginning at **12:00 Noon on March 30<sup>th</sup>**, the Service begins with the Good Friday Liturgy then Holy Communion from "The Pre-Sanctified" elements. This means that members will solemnly receive communion from the elements consecrated on Maundy Thursday.

**Private confessions** will be heard between **5:30pm - 6:00pm** prior to **Stations of the Cross commencing at 7:00pm**.

### **BIBLE STUDY RETURNS!!**

Wednesday Bible Study will resume in the Parish Hall on **April 4<sup>th</sup> from 10:00am to 11:00am**.

## **EASTER SERVICE**

**Easter Day, April 1<sup>st</sup>**, is the glorious day of Jesus' Resurrection from the dead. We will be celebrating Mass at **8:00am and 10:00am**.

**10:00am Mass will include a full choir celebration.** Easter is recognized as a Holy Day of Obligation so church attendance is important.



Plan on coming early. Parking will be available at the pre-school and Knox Insurance lots.

## **EASTER EGG HUNT**

YES! Easter egg hunts will be held at both masses for our church children. We will be collecting kid-friendly candy and mini crackers to stuff Easter Eggs with on or before March 25th. No peanuts or peanut butter please.

Please try to park your car in the additional parking lots on that day so the children will have a place to hunt for eggs. Contact Violet if you have any questions.

## **OUTREACH REPORT**

### **NATIONAL GUARD ARMORIES USED AS TEMPORARY SHELTER**

Our collections of "Blessings Bags" with men's essentials are being well received by the parish. Thank you so much. Now all we need is some men to volunteer to take over the bags during this month. The Shelter is only open from 6pm to 6am. If you are interested in handing off these bags to the Armory in Santa Ana some evening, please contact Lou Carlson or Fr. Neil. Once they have about three men, a firm date and time in February can be made.

After the February drop, we will have time for only one more collection. The cost to you to fill a Blessings Bag is about \$10. Our goal is still to support 100 men and the final deadline is March 18<sup>th</sup>. Please help the Church Men's Group make this very needed Outreach a success.

## **PAC-A-SAC EVENT**

Mark your calendar for volunteering to stuff lunch bags for the working homeless at Mary's Kitchen on **April 14<sup>th</sup> at 9am in the Parish Hall**. Watch for announcement posted in the Church lobby.

## **GENERAL NEWS**

### **THE CHOIR SINGS AT CHANCE-A-THON**

Don't miss a great opportunity to hear our own choir sing both secular and sacred songs at the Chance Theatre in Anaheim on Sunday, March 25, 2018 from 2pm-3pm.

Lisa Zaradich is preparing a wonderful hour of vocal and musical entertainment for us to enjoy. Select members of the Choir will solo. Three will join together as an acapella group. Others will play music. Perhaps, we might even hear a piece written from our own Music Director, Andrew Mauzey.

Pre-sale tickets will be made available the first week in March at the church. Or you can purchase them now on the Change Theatre website using the link: <https://app.arts-people.com/index.php?show=84021>

Proceeds go towards artistic and education programs in the local community. Any questions, please contact Sharon or Lisa.