

## **Donnybrook**

17 September 2021

### **Welcome**

Today, we have the only mention of the women disciples who accompanied and supported Jesus in his ministry. Little is known about them – two of them are obviously high status, with disposable income. Mary Magdalen – not to be conflated and confused with other figures – is a key witness to the cross and resurrection. Because of her role in John 20, she has the title in the Orthodox Church of the “apostle to the apostles.”

### **Steps**

Until the final quarter of the 20th century, almost all bible scholars were men, often ordained. Things have change considerably in that regard. There has been a huge recovery of the women mentioned in the New Testament. We don't have to agree with Dan Brown to recognise the value of all this.

Of course, it can't simply stay at the level of scholarship. Today, as we face a very unknown future as the community of faith, the new recognition of the role of women will be a key to the future. This is not simply to do with ordination; more importantly, it is to do with women's voice, experience and wisdom being heard fully throughout the church, at parish, ministerial and government levels.

Luke is a great supporter of women in the Gospel and in the Acts. Intriguingly, so is Paul, often portrayed as anti-woman. The key here is to separate a the genuine letters from later documents written in his name, such as today's first reading. Paul has women catechists, a woman deacon and a woman apostle (see Romans 16).

### **Conclusion**

So, the slight mention in today's Gospel opens up a world of dormant possibilities – perhaps now is the time to wake up. As Pope Francis says, we must listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches!