



Celebrate Mary in May

May is traditionally dedicated to honouring the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in all our Institutions, Churches, and Homes, we celebrate the month of May as a “Marian month” with Rosary processions and other popular devotions. This year, the Marian month falls during the Liturgical season of Easter and almost culminates with the feast of Mary Queen of the Apostles on 27th May and the feast of Pentecost on 28th May. As on the first Pentecost, Mary the first and the faithful Disciple of Jesus continues to gather the apostles of our time in prayer to obtain the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

The Rosary Rally, which we plan to have on the 16th & 17th of May to mark our Centenary year, is another privileged moment of infilling the Holy Spirit for us the Indian Disciples. Our Founder, Bl. James Alberione always envisioned the Sister Disciples to be like Moses and Mary the mother of Jesus a powerful intercessor before God. During the Rosary Rally, we shall embrace the whole world and unite ourselves with the people of God while praying the 100 Rosaries for 100 intentions.

Mary who believed in God’s plan with all her heart and said “yes” to him, help us to live a life rooted in deep faith. May our Synodal journey, and the preparations for our 10th General Chapter a pilgrimage of faith, continue to transform our lives towards the path of true Discipleship.



Women of the Resurrection

Sunday morning creeps in. The dawn has created the pink horizon; but the women who loved Jesus are already on their way. They are no weaklings. In defiance of all that their culture and religion say about their “role” in life, the expectations of their parents, husbands, or children, they have followed Him. Some of them sat at His feet, listened to His teachings, asked deep questions about God, about life and its purpose and learned from Him as true disciples. For the women from a culture, which wantonly dismissed and ignored them, this experience of walking as disciples of the great Rabbi Jesus, had brought in a richness of life that they had never anticipated.

They had come to know that this Rabbi was not a mere man, but was truly Immanuel - God with us.

He knew their frailties and failures more than any human being could, and yet His focus was more on their potential, their gifts, their worth and the cry of their hearts.

And now, the events of the past two days have been unprecedented. Their teacher had been crucified. The battered and lifeless body of the one they had followed was unfastened from a shameful cross and laid in a tomb. The Man who had understood them unlike anyone else they had ever known, was gone. The advocate who had defended Mary of Bethany after she had broken open her expensive jar of perfume in worship, the Saviour who had cast the seven demons out of Mary Magdalene, had been arrested, crucified, killed and buried. This situation had been indeed painful. Standing at the foot of the

cross on Friday afternoon, cheeks wet with tears, they thought perhaps they wasn't any meaning to live by. For, the One who had given them so much, there was no way they could leave Him, until they had mourned to their hearts' content. So, here they were, at daybreak, those women of strength, who "came from Galilee to care for his needs" (Matt 27:55), ready to do that one very last thing to demonstrate their loving devotion to him.

They are sombre and silent. What is there to say on a day like this? Speaking would only cause tears more than they have already shed. Eyes filled with tears, hearts full of pain, arms filled with a cumbersome load of spices they tread the path to the garden tomb. Perhaps, they utter a little prayer of gratitude for Joseph of Arimathea for the provision of this tomb! Gathering the spices to anoint his body, they set off. On their way to the tomb they discuss, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" (Mark 16:3).

They have no idea, how they would get a stone of that size moved. But they are women who had walked with Jesus. And so, a stone standing in their way would not keep them from what they intend to do. They are on a mission. They believe that the stone would be taken care of one way or the other.

When they arrive, they "found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke 24:2-3).

That impossibly heavy stone had been moved. But they were in for another trouble, one they would not have foreseen: **Jesus was not there.** "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" the angels asked. "He is not here but has risen!" (Luke 24:5-6) "And they remembered His words" (Luke 24:8).

Would they dare even to imagine that the angel's words could be true? With Jesus, they had dared to hope many things. And so, clinging tightly to that cord of hope, with trust and shock, joy and disbelief, confusion and amazement warring in their hearts and minds, they do the only thing they could. They turn and run, not in fear, but to the disciples with joy. Precious spices lie spilled on the ground, unheeded, but a so-much-more precious

message is now carried on their lips. He is risen! He is risen indeed!

John 20 is one of the most empowering Gospel stories for women. Distraught to find his tomb empty, Mary Magdalene does not recognize Jesus standing before her, but mistakes him for a gardener. When he utters her name, her eyes are opened. Jesus responds by saying: "Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father." From this moment, Mary Magdalene becomes the first witness of the Resurrection, and the one to inform the apostles of the great Event.

One can see a dramatic difference in the quality of relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus on the one hand and that between him and the two Emmaus walkers on the other. Mary Magdalene's heart was engaged, not just her head. Mary was miraculously made whole by Jesus after a life of torment and oppression by evil spirits. Luke 8:2 tells us that she had been a host to seven demons. We can only imagine the freedom and relief she must have experienced once Jesus had cast them out.

Mary embodied a heart of gratitude and devotion not only in following Jesus from this time, but supporting him financially and being present in the dark hours of his crucifixion. Her response reveals an intimacy, a sensitivity, and a spiritual awareness, which we do not see in case of the two men.

Unlike the Emmaus story, Jesus does not disappear once Mary realises who He is. Instead, she is given a specific message to give to his disciples. She must now stop clinging to Jesus to deliver that message.

This is extraordinary. A woman is commissioned to carry news of Jesus's Resurrection even though her testimony would not be easily valued in a court of law of that time. Jesus trusts and empowers her while simultaneously giving the disciples an opportunity to widen their circle of trust and accept her joyful news.

The central role of women in the resurrection stories gives us a dramatic picture of God calling

women for a crucial and wonderful aspect of His revelatory work. Given that the witness of women was discounted in the Mediterranean cultures of the first century, the fact that the Resurrection stories feature women, offers strong evidence in favour of the reliability of their testimony. Women in that culture were not regarded as trustworthy witnesses. During the years of His Messianic ministry, not only were women taught by Jesus, but they also became teachers of others (John 4:4-42). Jesus invited women to help spread the good news of the kingdom of God.

It is striking that women were not only the very first witnesses to the resurrection, but also the very first proclaimers of the resurrection. They were the first ones to tell the male disciples that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The first believers in the resurrection bore witness to it because, they were convinced of its veracity. That openness to accept women as messengers of the gospel continued after Jesus's resurrection.

Such a calling foreshadows the pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh, empowering all Christians to spread the good news of the Resurrection and its implications. The Easter narratives encourage women not to hold back in the expression of their gifts. At the same time, these narratives encourage men to receive what God has to say through women with gratitude.

What happened on Easter morning, therefore, foreshadows what would happen at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit would be poured out on "all flesh," so that "your sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17). In the church, women and men are empowered by the same Spirit. Women and men indeed are gifted by the Spirit to minister to others by means of prophesying, teaching, healing and so forth.

The Gospel narratives of Luke 22-24 and John 19-20 regarding crucifixion and resurrection reveal the remarkable courage of the women of Easter: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. They were there during the final hours of

Jesus' agony and death on the cross. And they were there for his dead body very early before the dawn to finish the burial process that was abruptly terminated by the Jewish Sabbath. What was from the outset a time of mourning suddenly turned out to being the most astounding event that radically changed their lives and ours forever! Jesus first appeared to these women and called them to go and proclaim the incredible news of His resurrection to the disciples. These women have become the protagonists of the Good News.

What is so impressive from a historical and literary points of view is the overwhelming consensus of the four Gospel narratives in their singular testimony that the tomb was found empty and that the women were the first ones to receive the gospel mandate to proclaim Jesus' resurrection. These striking similarities cogently/clearly point at the credibility of the gospel narratives.

"The women of the Dawn" aptly implies that by choosing women to inaugurate the new age of the coming kingdom, Jesus has established a new tradition. The fact that he was willing to break with the existing tradition and entrust women with the most momentous news in history, calls us all to hear anew his words, re-orient our expectations and realize that nothing is impossible in the kingdom of the Risen Jesus.

There is a little flame of hope that keeps burning in our hearts. It is a reawakening to the truth that we are not alone, that the new dawn is breaking and all our darkness is dispelled with the light of the Risen Lord. It is never too late to make a fresh start. Together with Mary, Our Blessed Mother, and all the women of yesterday, today, and tomorrow need to continue to enkindle the fire of God's great love for us and for all of creation.

May we be emboldened to make our prophetic voices heard in proclaiming that the God of life and love, truth, justice, peace, and solidarity has triumphed over the forces of evil, of sin, and death.

We are the uniquely gifted disciples of Jesus.

Sr Mary Gracelet Mudiappan

WOMEN OF THE GOSPEL

Mary Magdalene's Contribution to the life of Jesus

In every country, society, and tribe people have their own customs, culture, and food habits that are very unique to them. So also, the Israelites had their own rules and regulations regarding their social life and religious practices. One of them was washing the feet. It was the duty of the host to give his guest water for washing his feet; to omit this was a sign of marked unfriendliness. One of the most well-known instances of foot-washing in the Torah is when Abraham gave water to wash the feet of the three angels visiting him (Genesis 18:4).

In the Gospel of Luke 7: 36 we see Simon the Pharisee had invited Jesus to have dinner with him. The common courtesies of the day would have dictated that Simon offer Jesus, water to wash his feet, should have greeted his guest with a kiss and anointed his head with oil. Simon did not do any of those things for Jesus even though he had invited him to be his guest. Sometimes, the rich families, had their servants wash the guests' feet. But it was unheard of in Jewish society for a woman to wash the feet of a man other than her husband. The wife washed her husband's feet to give him personal attention, no matter how many maids she may have had.

In Simon's house, a dramatic change of sequence happens. A woman uninvited by the host enters the house, besides being a female, this woman was also well-known for leading a sinful life. Most probably she was a prostitute and she knew that she would be watched by all the men and that her actions would be questioned. But she didn't care. She was willing to lower herself in front of all, not worrying about what they would think or say. Mary not only touched Jesus' feet, but she also washed them with her tears, rubbed ointment on His feet, and wiped it using her hair!

For women, long hair is their glory. They take care of it, and they go to great lengths to keep it clean, neat, and shiny. Mary just used this precious thing to rub some ointment on Jesus' tired and dirty feet. Jesus himself commended that because she loved much, she did it. Earlier, she might have used her hair to seduce so many men, but here she is laying it out at the feet of Jesus as a complete self-abnegation and her passionate love for Jesus. In the loving and compassionate gaze of Jesus Mary felt fully understood and accepted, she realized her self-worth and dignity. Her restless heart found rest. From that time onward her life took a U-turn. ***But this demonstration of great love never left Jesus's mind.***



St John in his Gospel says that before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, **he loved them to the end.** (Jn 13:1) He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel wrapped around him. (Jn 13:4-5) If Jesus is doing something that is contrary to the custom of his days from where did he get this inspiration if not from Mary Magdalene? In washing Jesus's feet Mary Magdalene demonstrated her great love. When Jesus wanted to demonstrate his great love towards his disciples, he washed their feet. Both of them did something contrary to the custom of their day. The women who followed Jesus in his public life continually inspired him with their daring spirit to do things out of the box.

As women Disciples of the new dawn, let us dare to be different. The world is looking at us with hope and it requires radical discipleship. In the next issue, we shall learn more about the women who played a significant role in the life of Jesus.

Sr M. Regina Sebastian

Prayer for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

God grant me:

The Spirit of Wisdom

that I may despise the perishable things of this world
and aspire only after the things that are eternal

The Spirit of Understanding

to enlighten my mind with the light of Your divine truth

The Spirit of Counsel

that I may ever choose the surest way
of pleasing God and gaining heaven

The Spirit of Fortitude

that I may bear my cross with You and that I may overcome
with courage all the obstacles that oppose my salvation

The Spirit of Knowledge

that I may know God and know myself

The Spirit of Piety

that I may find the service of God sweet and amiable

and The Spirit of Fear

that I may be filled with a loving reverence towards God
and may dread in any way to displease Him. Amen.



May the Holy Spirit

Inflame our Hearts & Minds to become a new Creation

**Have a Goal In your Life
Do Not Be better than someone else, But Be Better than
WHO YOU USE TO BE**

ME & GOD - UNDERSTANDING LOVE

So that all may see and know, all may consider and understand. (Isaiah – 41: 20)

I thank God for creating me in His own image and likeness, I count each and every blessing and give glory to His name. For I am certain that I exist, it's because He understands me, with understanding He loves me, with an understanding heart He takes care of me, He sees all that I need and takes away all that I have no need of. I believe my God is a God who understands me and also everyone whom He has created in His image and likeness.

Even when I commit sin, I am confident in saying; God forgives me because He understands me. The number of times I sin and the number of times I continue to fall in sin, He understands me.

For every mistake that is made, I believe God understands me. Even when I hurt my God through my human frailty, I still keep saying that God understands me. Likewise, I keep repeating, God understands me and to this God of mine, I salute.

But how about me???? How many times did I say to myself, Hey God, I understand you!

Yes, dear friends, once again on a particular day I made a mistake and said, God will understand me that's fine. But this time my Spirit didn't keep silent, it cried out saying, my dear when are you going to understand God? At this time, I was silent, my mind was filled with questions, hard to understand, slowly I said to myself, If I could have married and keep on saying my husband understands me, never mind whatever it may be, will it be fair? Hmmm! Not so. Because, as for every married couple they have to grow together in understanding each other. If it is so, how about my Spouse whom I have married? Yes, our life as religious is a life of a spousal relationship with Christ Jesus, living together and understanding each other.

Yes, dear sisters as PDDM we have a common goal i.e. 'To become a SAINT' and a saint means to be united to Jesus in an intimate union that is very much possible as a religious.

Remember our Founder Blessed James Alberione says, Pass through MARY! As we enter in the month of May let us seek the help of Mary who understood well her son Jesus and who held Him very close. As we have decided to pray the chain rosaries let us ask for this intention.

Mary our Mother help us to understand Jesus as you understood him. Begin to understand Jesus, life will understand you and you will understand life, life as a religious.

Virgin Mary Mother of Jesus; Make us Saints. May the Blessed Mother Intercede for us!

God Bless us all!!!

Sr M. Eshwarya Lujá

Faith makes everything possible
Hope makes everything work
Love makes everything beautiful

