



Sent

Mary Magdalene: A model of being called and being sent

Participant Guide

Purpose: Throughout scripture we see how women are being called by God, called by Christ, converted and changed, and then sent out as leading members of the Church, serving those who serve, leading the world into a relationship with Christ. Mary Magdalene is a significant example of this – called by Christ out of sin, changed from the inside out, emptied of her old life, and then sent, as Apostle to the Apostles. This is our visual for the role women play in ministry. In this study we will discover how we are called, changed and sent to serve the Church, serve our brothers and sisters in Christ, and grow closer to sainthood through our feminine genius.

Together, ask for the intercession of Our Lady of Good Counsel, patroness of MCCW.

Let us pray. Lord of heavenly wisdom, Who has given us your own Mother Mary to be our guide and Counselor in this our lives, Grant that in all things we may have the grace to seek maternal instruction and to profit by it in humility and love. O Mother of Good Counsel, Patroness of the Military Council of Catholic Women, help us to understand and fulfill the mind and will of your Divine Son, Jesus Christ. Under the blessing of the Father, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, may we be responsible and intelligent daughters of the Church. May we labor in the spirit of renewal to realize more perfectly the Kingdom of God here below, as the only true preparation for our share in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Called

1. Hearing the call:

- a. Before we can be sent anywhere, we have to be called. We have to hear the voice of one who loves us, called to enter into a relationship with Him, and experience that perfect love. Mary Magdalene clearly heard a call from Jesus. There are many interpretations as to who Mary was: the woman bathing Christ's feet with her tears? Mary, the sister of Martha? We know her name is specifically mentioned as having seven demons sent out of her and that she clearly heard Christ call her.
- b. Read Luke 7: 37-38, the story of the woman bathing the feet of Jesus. Using Ignatian spirituality, read this scripture passage and put yourself in the scene. Imagine the environment, the sights and sounds, the people and their voices.
- c. Discussion Questions:



- i. In what ways do you connect with the woman being called in this passage? How is her reaction a response to the love of Christ? When have you felt that love so strongly?
- ii. In what ways do the sacraments of initiation call us in this way?

2. Responding to the call

- a. The papal encyclical *Mulieris Dignitatem*, written by Saint Pope John Paul II in the 1980's, explores and explains the Church's ideas about the dignity and vocation of women. In it, he establishes that from the beginning of creation women have been imbued with a God-given dignity.
- b. In his "Letter to Women," written in 1995 for the occasion of the fourth World Conference on Women Pope Saint John Paul observes that "womanly insight enriches the world's understanding and helps make human relations more honest and authentic." And though he is very cautious in his writings to point out that we should not simplify the characteristics of women to stereotypes of femininity, he notes that by design woman was made to be sensitive, intuitive, and generous and focused on relationships.
- c. With these things in mind, we begin to see that when God created woman and man, He had a plan and a purpose for us. Read Luke 8:1-3, the simple description of the women who joined the disciples.
- d. Discussion Questions:
 - i. What gifts are we given as women that compliment and are needed to help the masculinity in the Church? How does it help our priests? Our husbands? The single men? Our children?
 - ii. Mary joined the other women. Her service was a group effort. When have you watched your gifts come together, the result being greater than the sum of the parts?
 - iii. When have you thought your participation in the Church wasn't necessary, or wasn't useful? What about your call from Christ shows you that that isn't true?

Changed

1. Being emptied



- a. St. John of the Cross, in his work “The Living Flame of Love”, talks about three caverns of memory, intellect and will. Read the paragraphs on the emptying these caverns.
- b. St. Mary Magdalene was emptied first of the seven demons, then of her life. When she followed the call from Christ to follow her she set aside all that burdened her from her previous life. Unlike the young man who could not set aside all his wealth to follow Christ (Matt 19: 16-30), she set aside all of her former life and not only followed but served!
- c. Discussion Questions:
 - i. What earthly things do you allow to take up even the tiniest of space in your caverns of memory, will and intellect?
 - ii. When we empty ourselves, what do we think that will look like? How is it different from our expectations? Do we immediately feel the filling of our spirit with Christ’s love? Do we sometimes feel the hollow emptiness of loneliness?

2. Letting go

- a. Twice Mary Magdalene was asked to let go of her savior. First, at the foot of the cross, next to His Blessed Mother (John 19:25) and then again in the garden following the resurrection (John 20:15-17). The first one, witnessing His death, was so tangible, so visible, so easily participated in. She was called to His side and had to let go of His friendship and love in His dying.
- b. The resurrection was a different story. The joy of seeing Him alive! Immediately followed by being held at arm's length of the One Whom she loved and told she could not hold on to Him. She must let Him go once again. St. Teresa of Avila references this scene in regards to experiencing the Dark Night of the Soul - being emptied, held at a distance, not able to embrace the Lord.
- c. Discussion Questions:
 - i. When have you had to let go? Maybe in a friendship, when you move, or a job you love. When have you had to simply trust that God was calling you to greatness in Him and let go of the earthly things that hold you back?
 - ii. When have you had your own “Dark Night”? Feeling as if you have been emptied, not of your own will but by Christ, and experienced that loneliness and longing.

3. Being filled

- a. As St John of the Cross says of the emptying of the caverns “...from what they suffer when they are empty, we can gain some knowledge of their enjoyment and delight when they are filled with God...” That experience of loss and longing



when we are emptied out and let go provides the space to be completely filled with God. Mary Magdalene began to be filled again the moment Christ gave her a command “*But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’*” (John 20:17). She was filled with mission.

- b. What delight is being filled with the mission of Christ! Mary Magdalene immediately went to the disciples and made the greatest statement ever uttered in history “I have seen the Lord!” (John 20:18). Only by the grace of God could she ever say those words, and they held such significant meaning because she was emptied at the cross and was now filled on Easter Sunday.
- c. Discussion Questions:
 - i. What is the mission you are called to in your ministry as a woman of the chapel?
 - ii. What ways does your CWOC or women’s ministry want to serve the church as Mary served the disciples?
 - iii. As we studied earlier, women are created uniquely to bring insight and understanding that men cannot inherently grasp. How does your women’s ministry complement and make more fruitful the mission of your faith community?

Sent

1. Ready for mission

- a. We hear Mary Magdalene being filled with mission and then sent - sent to bring the good news to the apostles. This is why she is called “The Apostle to the Apostles”. She was the first to know and the first to share. She never ran, she allowed herself to be prepared for this mission through suffering and sacrifice, and she was His instrument to bring the Good News to the world.
- b. Being ready for mission doesn’t always mean having all the tools at our fingertips. Let’s look at all the disciples gathered together at Pentecost, including Mary the mother of God and Mary Magdalene. All the disciples gathered in the upper room, unprepared. Many of them afraid to be recognized as a follower of Christ. They did not have the tools! Read Acts 2:1-4.
- c. Discussion Questions:
 - i. What mission are you personally called to? Your women’s ministry? How have you already responded?



- ii. What gifts have you recognized you have received? Perhaps a charism or calling on your heart. Use the MCCW module “Gifted” to find what your gifts might be.

2. Trusting

- a. Most of us have probably stated in some way, shape or form “trust in God” and said it with faith and fervor. However, when it comes time to put it into action, trusting God is difficult! We turn now to a story of Mary Magdalene, perhaps an embellished story, after the disciples entered into their missions throughout the world. Read the story of Mary Magdalene.
- b. Mary and her siblings were said to have trusted enough to go willingly to their death without a doubt that Christ was calling them. Mary had so completely emptied herself that she was only filled with the Holy Spirit of love of her Lord. She fully expected a martyr's death and welcomed it. The shipwreck must have been a shock but it did not sway her. When God shipwrecks our ideas and plans, especially when they appear to come from Him, we can be left confused, stranded, and lonely all over again. Were we not called? Did we not respond? Were we not sent? Trusting God means setting aside our own interpretations and assumptions about the call on our hearts. We allow him to unravel the Divine Language He places on our hearts, sometimes through the help of a spiritual director or through deepening prayer. Usually, almost always, it is not as we expect - it is so much more!
- c. Discussion Questions:
 - i. When was there a time you thought you understood God’s call and then you were taken in a completely different direction?
 - ii. Have you ever considered taking on a spiritual director to help you interpret God’s call? If not, what would prevent you? If you have, how has it strengthened your call to mission?

3. Challenging others

- a. Being sent is not a solo event. We are never sent alone, we are never sent somewhere desolate, and we are never sent for merely our own sake. We are always sent to bring in the harvest. Mary Magdalene was a source of challenge to the apostles, her news of Christ’s resurrection spurring them to run, not walk, to the tomb. Her testimony was a topic of discussion for those on the road to Emmaus, which they quickly shared to the unknown Lord before He revealed Himself to them. The life of this woman was a trustworthy challenge for them to act on,
- b. Her challenge didn’t end there. The great saints, especially in carmelite spirituality, have been greatly challenged by Mary Magdalene. St Teresa of Avila



looked to the Apostle to the Apostle as an example of spiritual martyrdom and living a life transfixed by Christ, painfully changing to receive His love. St. Elizabeth of the Trinity also Mary Magdalene, frequently, in her writing. She told everyone to “display your misery like Magdalene at the Master’s feet and ask him to set you free.” She is a light, a hope, and a perpetual apostle to those in the Church through all eternity - a saint to help us hear the call, empty ourselves to receive our mission and then be sent to proclaim the new of the resurrected Christ. One day, like Magdalene, we pray we will all say “I have seen my Lord!”

c. Discussion Questions:

- i. What is your greatest challenge in being sent? Is it time? Money? Relationships?
- ii. When you read about Mary Magdalene, what parts of her life speak the loudest to you? In what ways do you connect with her? In what ways do you want to bring her more intimately into your life?