Columns
Ministry



(Patricia's Fashion & Art)



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Along with my companions, I was sent to Spain in 2002 for a charism renewal, a program during which sisters renew their appreciation for the particular charism of their community. It was in Vic, a city in the province of Barcelona.

One of my friends from India wanted a picture of the "Last Supper." So, I went to a shop and asked in my broken Spanish "Quiero comprar una foto de la última desayuno." People in the shop had a belly laugh. I had no clue why they were laughing. After quite some time when they could control their laughter, one lady said (still laughing) "Aun no existe." Suddenly I heard someone speaking English and asked for help. She helped me understand that instead of a picture of "Last Supper" I was asking for "Last Breakfast." Anyway, I did not get the picture, since it was out of stock.

So, while preparing for the July 22 feast of Mary Magdalene this year, I was reminded of that incident, and thought to myself: Why not write something on "Primer Desayuno," The First Breakfast?

This is an imaginary conversation between Mary Magdalene and the churchgoers at the first breakfast.

Mary Magdalene: Friends, welcome to the Kinship Community for the first Easter breakfast. Before we proceed with your questions, let us meditate for a few minutes. Kindly keep your eyes open: Feel this gorgeous morning when we are gathered under the open blue skies. Listen to the chirping of the birds, their flying helter-skelter, twittering and breathing the life-giving oxygen, heralding the good news of resurrection. Watch the animals moving out of their stables. Trees swaying with first rays of sunlight. Inhale the fragrance of flowers, proclaiming the dawn of new leadership. Breathe in festivity, along with stars and the rainbow participating in this Easter dawn breakfast liturgy. Feel the enchanting rhythm of this inclusive and interconnected grand finale of the paschal mystery. See the empty tomb representing the womb of the divine pulsebeat of Jesus, as sublime Eucharist. Breathe in peace and breathe out Alleluia!

Let's have your questions while we are having our first breakfast together.

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Churchgoer: What made you go to the tomb in the early morning?

Mary Magdalene: When Jesus' male disciples denied, betrayed and abandoned him and went into hiding in a locked upper room, I was accompanied by my sisters to go to the tomb for the customary anointing of his body with spices. When he called my name, I felt healed, whole and liberated. One resurrected voice called me to a mission: "Go and tell." I felt honored to be the first storyteller about the anointed voice of the risen Jesus. Even today the Christian religion equates the woman with "sin," but I know I am a blessing.

Tell me: Did Jesus establish any church or Eucharist?

Mary Magdalene: Jesus established neither, but given that he was an itinerant visionary, he dreamed about how we gathered today, as “kinship community.” I am sure, by baptism, we all are commissioned to proclaim good news as kin — priests and prophets forever.

What, then, was the Passover meal?

Mary Magdalene: The Passover meal was the thanksgiving celebration of God's deliverance of Israel from slavery. As a Jew, Jesus neither proclaimed a church nor began a Eucharist, but was fully committed to reforming the malpractices of his religion from within. He never established his kingdom, but a kinship community, which was inclusive of women-men-Nature-God. He showed us a transcending spirituality.

I am glad that we followed him by joining this community. I think your Pope Francis is trying to do the same thing by bringing out two powerful encyclicals: *Laudato Si’* and *Fratelli Tutti*. Apparently, he is trying to lead you to the kinship community. It is high time that you should return to it if you want to be relevant to your time. So, work on renewing and revitalizing the church and follow his vision (Isaiah 61:1-2)

What is transubstantiation?

Mary Magdalene: What is that tongue twisting word? It sounds like a magical word. Jesus came to reveal the majesty of God's compassionate love for all and not the

magical performance of any sort. May he save you from that superstitious belief. Jesus shared a real meal in grateful remembrance of God's mercy. You don't have to rely on that little wafer as Jesus's body and blood. The community meal, sharing with the needy, caring for the sick, welcoming the marginalized, through this all you become the body and blood of Jesus to them.

What was your kinship community like?

Mary Magdalene: Our only rules and regulations were: love God, love your neighbors and follow the Beatitudes scrupulously. I was privileged to travel with Jesus as he tended the community.

We were a small band of followers with the radical message of Jesus, which was in conflict with Jewish cultural religion. Some of us were ostracized and eventually excommunicated from the synagogue by our local hierarchy.

Was Simon Peter, our first pope, appointed by Jesus?

Mary Magdalene: No, he was asked to tend the sheep. After the burial of Jesus, Peter was hiding in the upper room out of fear of Jesus' enemies.

Did you study theology in theologates in your time?

Mary Magdalene: No. We gathered in our houses, studied scripture in the light of the relevant situations of our time. As a questioning community, we challenged one another, discussed the injustices we met with. We were deeply aware of the consequences of living a radical model of kinship community with the spirituality of kenosis.

What is your community membership like?

Mary Magdalene: It's best explained by the famous theologian Hans Kung: envisioning church as an ecumenical community of believers. We had within our local communities all that we needed for human deliverance: the message of Jesus to proclaim, baptism in the name of Jesus as a rite of initiation, the celebration of a meal in grateful remembrance and the recognition and commissioning of various gifts and ministries of each member within the community. That's it.

Describe your leadership style.

Mary Magdalene: We never prepared anybody for leadership but followed our Guru Jesus' message: "Let the leader become one who serves" (Lk. 22:26). We always practiced kinship and social friendship in solidarity. Our leadership was committed to growth, undeterred by darkness and comfortable with risk.

What is your message to the kinship community today?

Mary Magdalene: With Joan Chittister I call upon men "to listen in humility to the call of Christ in the messages of courageous women, calling everyone to unity and universalism, to a Christianity that rises above sexism, a religion that transcends the idolatry of maleness, and a commitment to the things of God that surmount every obstacle and surpasses every system." And I ponder the words of the late Sri Lankan priest Tissa Balasurya: "How can having a womb be essential for the incarnation, yet be a barrier to ordination?"