



The Parish Churches of S Philip and S Augustine and S Matthew with S Mary the Virgin Newcastle

Homily for the Feast of S Mary Magdalene (22nd July) 2026

The Gospel reading, inevitably, recounts the encounter of Saint Mary Magdalene with the risen Christ. In recent decades, commentary has mused at length on the significance of her participation in these seminal events of our religion: whether the choice of Saint Mary Magdalene tells us something about the way that we should view human society.

Saint Paul would support this line of inquiry - though he might struggle to agree with some of the conclusions that are proposed. In the Epistle, he tells the Christians in Corinth that the Death and Resurrection of Christ together with the divine Love, which they manifest, prompts us to consider our perceptions - how we see the world and the people who live around us. Reflexion on Who Jesus of Nazareth was and is in the light of the events at Golgotha and the Empty Tomb changed our perspective on Him and His true identity: not just another man, but the Son of God; and, as we would later come to articulate it, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Likewise, the recognition of that Truth must also, therefore, make an impact on the way that we view the people around us. The divine love embodied in Christ's saving work seeks to be reflected in our attitudes, which are, in turn, shaped by our perspectives on the people we meet.

It is hardly a unique experience for us to change our opinions about someone. We might see a side of them, we have never seen before; or, more generally, our observations of life and the context of their lives can lead us to adjust or moderate our evaluation of them - for better or worse - if not change them altogether.

Saint Paul's contention is that the Death and Resurrection of Christ is just such a sea-changing event, so to speak. The fact that God can look on humanity with such loving eyes as to sacrifice His Son must have implications for the way that we look on people around us.

The starting point for this change of perspective is, of course, the Resurrection itself; and if it is to exercise its transforming power over our perceptions, it must be more than an inert intellectual notion: it must be a living reality in our minds: something at which we daily wonder. We must sustain a perpetual consciousness that, in an aphorism derived from Saint Augustine of Hippo, we are the Easter People.

Easter people do not just look back to the moment when Saint Mary Magdalene encountered the risen Christ in the Garden, but sustain the implications of the wonder that she beheld: not least in providing a means through which God can continue to manifest the love, which was revealed as the Resurrection vindicated the Death of His Son.

This love transforms the way that we evaluate the people we meet, not setting aside in our minds their faults and failings, but seeing these in the context of Christ's saving Sacrifice. It is tempting to say that we should see them as God sees them - and this must be the ultimate goal; but for most, as least, such an aspiration is probably unattainable in this world: most of us cannot even see ourselves as God sees us.

Never-the-less, if we are truly to proclaim the Resurrection of Christ as a living reality, we must, surely, in the example of our own lives, however falteringly, exhibit its transformative quality with regard to the way in which people are perceived.