

Lent Reflections on the Stained-Glass Windows



All Souls Chapel Window (South side)

Holy Tuesday

The Three Marys at the Tomb



*Window in the south aisle
(near the Chapel)*



*Given by Fr Alfred Wilson (the first
Vicar) in memory of his sister,
Sister Maria of the Community of
St Peter in Kilburn. Moved to this
position when the All Souls Chapel
was built in 1909*

Reading: Mark 15:40 -47

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid.

Commentary

The window in the 'All Souls Chapel' was given in 1911. The upper part is in memory of W. N Hartley, who died on the 25th May that year, and of Sunday School Teachers and Scholars. It was designed by Lavers and Westlake, leading producers of Gothic Revival stained-glass in the 19th

century. It features the 'Three Marys' at the empty tomb being addressed by an angel.

All the Gospels tell us that women followers of Jesus were present at His Crucifixion, His deposition from the Cross, and, on Easter morning, were the first to tell the news of the Resurrection. Several of these women were called Mary, a common name for Jewish women of the time (Maryam or Miriam). Mary Magdalene is mentioned in all four Gospels. The others mention Mary, mother of James the Less and Joseph or Joses (Mark and Matthew), Salome (Mark), Mary, the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Matthew) and Joanna (Luke).

St John tells us that the three women present at the crucifixion were Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Mary the wife of Clopas, (whom some have interpreted as the same as Mary, the mother of James the Less). He does not record that they were present at the tomb on Easter Day – he only tells of Mary Magdalene in the garden - but St Mark tell us that the women present were Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas and (Mary) Salome – traditionally called 'The Three Marys.'

The earliest known representation of three women visiting the tomb of Jesus is a 3rd century fresco in a Syrian church. By the 5th century such representations become the standard depiction of the Resurrection, until the 12th century when images of the Risen Jesus Himself were also used.

Our windows of these 'myrrhbearers' are windows of the Resurrection. The depiction of the three women suggests those that St John describes. We see Mary Magdalene depicted like a courtesan in extravagant red and

gold with an urn of ointment at her feet. The other women are more soberly dressed, but the blue suggests the Mother of Jesus and if so, then the other woman must be Mary of Clopas.

In the South Aisle window, we see the same configuration of women: Mary Magdalene kneeling - her uncovered hair loose about her shoulders- with a jar of ointment at her feet, the Mother of the Lord in blue and 'the other Mary' in a swirling sage green cloak. The angel sits on the lid of the Tomb which has been cast to the floor, his look determined, as his fingers point heavenwards: 'He is not here, He is Risen!'

Meditation

from the Russian Orthodox Church of St John, Colchester

To do anything for the Church, for the Body of Christ, in this world, is difficult, because it requires faith. And those of little faith have little time and patience for the Church.

For instance, recently a lady came here and said: 'You are so lucky, you have a beautiful church'. I was astonished by such an attitude. Firstly, there is no such thing as 'luck'. Secondly, the little that we have here belongs not to us, but to God. And thirdly, anything that is here is certainly not the result of luck, but of one of two things: either it is the result of God's undeserved blessing, which can be given to us and can be taken away from us. Or else it is the result of tears and sweat and blood, sacrifice and hard work, in other words – myrrhbearing, selfless caring for the Body of Christ. And myrrh-bearing is not only participating in the sacraments, preaching the Gospel and confessing the

Faith. It is also doing that myriad of things which are so difficult because they require our sacrifice. For:

Those who sing in church are myrrhbearers.

Those who clean the church are myrrhbearers.

Those who prepare the flowers for the services are myrrhbearers.

Those who look after the garden are myrrhbearers.

Those who sew vestments and altar-coverings are myrrhbearers.

Those who bake prosphora (holy bread) are myrrhbearers.

Those who prepare tea or donate food or wash up are myrrhbearers.

Those who donate icons or make offerings of money are myrrhbearers.

Even those who simply come and pray for the salvation of all are myrrhbearers.

All those who work for the Body of Christ, the Church, in this world, but are not of this world, are myrrhbearers, because they show that they too selflessly love Christ.

And what is the reward of myrrhbearers?

It is to be the first to see and know the Crucified Body of Christ Risen, the first to hear the words of the Angel resplendent and whiter than snow: Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is Risen!

This is our joy, not only to feel, but also to know that the Body of Christ, the Church, is Risen, for She is the place of the Resurrection, and we are witnesses of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection. Moreover, when we care for the Church, the Church cares for us, for we are risen with Her.

May we all always have and cherish this inner knowledge of the Truth of Christ, being myrrhbearing witnesses to His Crucifixion and His Resurrection.

Prayer

O Risen Jesus,
may I always seek you and find you,
think about you, speak to you,
and do everything
for your honour and glory.
Be always my hope, my peace,
my refuge and my help
in whom my heart is rooted,
so that I may never be separated from you.
Amen.

(Saint Bonaventure)