

April 17, 2020

One time some years ago I was flying back to Chicago from Paris in business class and the man in the seat next to me, a French man, told when after I identified myself as a Catholic priest, that Mary Magdalene's grave was on vineyard property that he owned in the south of France near Aix en Provence.

I was amused but not convinced but didn't argue his point. He was a wine merchant on his way to an expensive wine exhibition in Tennessee, so he explained, which further amused me being the snob that I am, I thought who buys wine in Tennessee.

Anyway, when we were getting off the plane he gave me his card remarking that he was the first international wine producer to have business cards in braille which his card was.

His name, M. Chapoutier. Google that name and you will see that he is a major grower of grapes and producer of fine wines and he does have a vineyard in Aix en Provence and that is the legendary site of Mary Magdalene's tomb.

The legend which has no basis in biblical or extra-biblical writing but is fervently believed in Provence is that after the resurrection, the Jewish religious leaders were afraid to kill any of the followers of Jesus because that would just fuel belief, so they put Mary Magdalene by herself in a boat with no oars or sails and pushed her out to sea, and she washed up on the southern coast of France across the Mediterranean from Jerusalem.

Some versions of that legend have her put in the boat with her child allegedly fathered by Jesus but remember there is no biblical or extra biblical evidence to support a sexual or romantic relationship between Jesus and Mary.

Mary Magdalene **as we know her** is actually, if you take the Gospel texts seriously, a composite of various texts, that Pope Gregory in the 6th century created by erroneously assuming that all texts referring to Mary were about the same person and then lumping all of that into the woman “caught in the act of adultery” brought to Jesus for condemnation.

He did that because people were getting smart and able to read for themselves and saw, accurately, that Mary Magdalene was the first witness to the resurrection and the one sent to tell the apostles including Peter, undermining the political rationale for an imperial pope and the all-male clerical leadership along with the juridical requirement that those called to ordination were gradually called exclusively by other clerics and not the people, with the added requirement that they not marry or if married not have children.

The reflection I offer you today is that it is wise to not believe everything you hear from leaders of church or state and to do some homework because what you hear may sound outlandish or it may sound like Gospel truth, but it is a good idea to think for yourselves which is hard in these times of great and grave and sad things that we are hearing.

Be peaceful, my friends, be peaceful.