

Readings for May 21, 2023

Luke 8: 2-3

And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Mag'dalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joan'na, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

from *Women Remembered: Jesus' Female Disciples*

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In the early churches there was enormous diversity, and female leaders are found in most traditions. . . . Their claims to authority could not have sprung from nowhere, and the evidence of important women disciples of Jesus and their role as (at the very least) witnesses to the resurrection suggests that they functioned as role models for centuries. . . . One of the problems is that surviving literature has been selected in a way that promotes a type of Christianity that triumphed in the 4th century under the auspices of the Roman emperor Constantine, a military leader who adopted Christianity with a view to conquering land and defeating his enemies, given that one branch of the faith had become increasingly popular with his soldiers. Despite the dominant discourse that would marginalize women at this time, fragments of texts, inscriptions, art and archaeology can enable us to catch a glimpse of women still exercising leadership roles, on the basis of the precedents they knew, through to the 6th and 7th centuries.