

Do Not Hold On To Me

Question:

Why did the Lord appear to Mary Magdalene after the resurrection?
Why did He say to her "Do not cling to Me,"? (John. 20:17) While He allowed Saint Thomas to touch Him? (John 20:27).
He, also, allowed the rest of the apostles to touch him. (Luke 24:39)
Did He prevent her from touching Him because she is a woman?
Did He allow them to touch Him because they are men?

Answer:

The Lord Jesus Christ allowed Mary Magdalene to touch Him before anyone of the apostles, as it was mentioned in their first meeting after the resurrection in (Matt. 24) Mary Magdalene, with the other Mary went to look at the tomb. The tomb was empty. The big stone was rolled away from the entrance. The angel told them the good news of the resurrection of the Lord. On leaving the tomb, the Lord met them and said to them "Peace be with you. "(John 20:19).

Here, Saint Matthew, the Evangelist says, "So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. ". (Matt 28:9) So, Mary Magdalene has touched Christ after the resurrection. The Lord did not prevent her from touching Him because she is a woman but, on the contrary, He charged her with going to His disciples and telling them about the good news of the resurrection and her meeting with Him in the Galilee. It was a great honour that the Lord charged a woman with carrying good news to the apostles. But it happened afterwards that Mary Magdalene yielded to the doubts spread by the chief priests about the resurrection. They filled the world with rumours announcing that the body was stolen from the tomb while the guards were sleeping. It was possible for these rumours to leave no effect on Mary were it not for her to see that the apostles themselves did not believe in the resurrection. As for the doubts of the disciples, they were very clear as they did not believe the story of the resurrection. Mary has gone to them and told them the good news of Christ's resurrection. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen Him, they did not believe it. (Mark 16:9-11) When Mary Magdalene saw that Jesus' apostles did not believe her and trusted neither the other women nor the two from Emmaus, she began to doubt.

She was still a young lady and perhaps what she had seen at the tomb was a dream or imagination. Had she faith stronger than that of the apostles? It is something absurd. She thought in herself; perhaps some men might have stolen the body and carried it from its place! They might not be the apostles but other men, perhaps the gardener, for example, might have taken it for any reason! Of course, all these were doubts against faith because she herself saw the empty tomb. She also saw Christ, touched Him and heard His voice. Moreover, she heard the good news from the angel, then from the two angels. As Peter had denied Christ three times during the judgment, so did Mary Magdalene. She denied the resurrection of the Lord three times. These denials are written in one chapter. (John 20:12,13,15)

1. The first denial took place when she went to the Saints Peter and John and said to them "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!" (John 20:2). These words mean that God has not yet risen from the dead as they have taken His body and put it another place.

2. The second denial took place when she was weeping outside the tomb and the two angels asked her "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." (John 20:13)
3. The third denial took place when The Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her. Because of her weeping, she did not see Him well and thought Him to be the gardener. Perhaps He concealed Himself from her ... She said to Him "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him. " (John 20.-15) When He showed Himself to her and she knew Him, she cried out "Rabboni!" (which means: Teacher)

The Lord prevented her from touching Him to rebuke her for denying His resurrection three times. Also, it was not permissible for her to touch Him with her precarious faith as if He were a common person carried by someone to any place. She said to Peter and John "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." (John 20:2). She said to the two angels " they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him " (John 20:13). She said to the Lord thinking He was the gardener "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, " (John 20:15). All her words were repetition to the soldiers' pretence and showed her precarious faith. The Lord said to her "Do not cling to Me ..." which means 'Don't approach Me with your shaken faith and with you doubts after you have seen Me, clasped My feet and heard My voice.'

'Don't approach Me after I have charged you with a message to My disciples.' 'Don't approach Me after you have seen the tomb and heard the angels' testimony.' 'Don't hold on to Me with your denial, for I have not yet returned to the Father.' As for the phrase " I have not yet ascended to My Father. " (John 20:17).

Saint Severus, from Antioch as well as Saint Augustine did not take it literally but symbolically because she had held on Him before. The two saints added that the Lord wished to say to her "Don't hold on to Me with your precarious faith because I have not reached in your mind the standard of My Father's divinity. "You think My body is still dead and the people can carry it wherever they wish!!" However, He consoled her and at the same time He charged her with a message to the apostles.