

Women: The Financial Supporters of Christ and His Apostles

By Fr. Ted Bobosh

Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities – Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance. (Luke 8:1-3)

It is clear in the Gospels that there were women disciples who also followed Christ just as His male disciples did. Surprisingly, Luke notes that it is the women disciples who fund Christ the itinerant minister who traveled the countryside preaching the Gospel with His male disciples. It is surprising because one might expect in the New Testament times that it was the men who were the breadwinners while the women stayed home to raise the children and take care of the household. The Gospels do not mention men or the apostles themselves financing Jesus's ministry. In fact, in one of the few exchanges between Christ and His disciples about funding, the male disciples worried about how they could afford to feed the crowds following them ([Mark 6:35-44](#); [John 6:5-14](#)). There is no word in the Gospel about males providing financial support for Christ, while it is always men who oppose Him. And Judas, the male treasurer of the apostles was embezzling money from Christ and the apostles ([John 12:6](#)) — no doubt stealing the very money the women disciples were providing to Christ.

So, it is surprising that women weren't given more designated roles in the growing Christian movement (women often were in charge of household finances in the Roman Empire). It is the women disciples who stand at the crucifixion watching Christ die while the men disciples (except for John) are hiding. It is to the women disciples that the resurrection is first proclaimed, again while the male disciples are fearfully hiding in self-preservation. When in Acts 6:1-7 there is a dispute among the Christians about some widows being neglected in the distribution of charity, the Apostles appoint a group of men to correct the situation. Maybe they believed men were better equipped to deal with this situation in that culture even though it was women being neglected: i.e., those causing the inequality in distributing charity (fellow Jews) would respond better to males correcting them than women correcting them.

Sometime in the 5th-6th Centuries, [Jacob of Sarug](#) wrote a poetic praise for his spiritual mentor [St Ephrem the Syrian](#) (d. Ca 373AD), praising him for restoring women to active ministry in the Church in Ephrem's lifetime. He praises Ephrem for introducing women singers in the Church in the 4th Century, an innovation which Jacob truly appreciated:

Jacob sees allowing women to sing in church (and thus proclaim the Gospel) as the Church finally embracing the values of the Kingdom of Heaven in which men and women are equal in God's eyes. It may have taken the Church 350 years to get there, but in Jacob's mind giving women their rightful place in the Church truly reflected the Gospel vision of God's Kingdom.

Today, with women being not only in the workforce, but holding positions of leadership, it seems it should be even more acceptable for women to be in leadership positions in the Church. Women are not limited in society as they were in the days of Christ, so their role in the Church as leaders should be a normal part of Church life today.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

... Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:5-6)

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