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A Step Behind the Stars

The Day of St. Mary Magdalene

ROGER B. KRONMANN

[The following sermon was preached by the Reverend Roger B. Kronmann, pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Mo. (The American Lutheran Church), at the first eucharistic celebration at Concordia Seminary after the declaration of pulpit and altar fellowship with The American Lutheran Church by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which operates the seminary. Pastor Kronmann also participated in the celebration of the sacrament. Those who heard the sermon and took part in the service asked that the sermon appear in this journal as one indication of our joy in this new manifestation of Christian fellowship.]

No matter what we do or where we go,
No matter who we are or where we live,
No matter what the time or what the year,
No matter if we walk upon the moon,
No matter if we travel to the stars
And populate the planets lost in space,
We cannot use a rocket for a cross,
We cannot substitute the stars for Christ,
We cannot blast into eternity.
The biggest day of all will be the day
Our love of others is as deep as space,
Our sense of justice fits infinity,
Our deepest love is that we have for God.
If our technology should reach the stars
While faith and mind and love ignore the
Lord,
A prostitute in ancient Palestine
Will then be wiser in perceiving life
Than we who walk the craters of the moon.
We need what Mary needed yesterday,
And what we need we never will obtain
From moon dust, meteors, or microscopes.
That need cannot be met by what we do;
That need depends on what the Lord has
done,
And that perception is more important
than
The mysteries we soon will understand
Within the dialog of matter

And of energy. Today or
Yesterday we need to know ourselves for
what we are,
And only that will tell us what we need.
We cannot live without our daily bread
And we must explore the universe,
But neither do we live by bread alone;
While seeking stars, we also need to know
The God who loves His people more than
stars.
St. Mary Magdalene perceived herself
And also knew what Jesus came to give.
Her knowledge of astronomy was slim,
And yet she loved the Savior of the world.
If we would have to make a choice today,
We need a savior sooner than a star.
Simon lived like many live today.
Quite pleased with what he did and what
he had,
Quite satisfied to live with what he was,
Quite sure that while he hadn't reached
the moon,
He had at least reached high for his suc-
cess.
He was a specialist except of self,
And his disease is still the plague of man,
For anyone who knows himself knows sin.
If we should conquer everything but self,
We will not conquer anything at all.

While Simon sat in self-complacency,
A woman of the street kissed Jesus' feet.
Her reputation was not made in space;
It came from what she did upon the earth.
She failed the laws of her society.
She sold her flesh to those who paid for
love.

She knew her failures and therefore knew
her need.

God opened to her penance and belief.
She did not know E equals MC squared,
And yet she knew that God had come to
earth.

She felt the love that He had come to
bring.

She was a sponge for all the grace He gave.
St. Mary is not known for what she did
To change the course of human history,
For she is known because she loved the
Lord,

And her success is still our greatest need.
If we can chart the boundaries of space,
And if we whiz around the galaxies
At velocities that singe the speed of light,
Patrolling what was once the sole domain
Of meteors and rays and seraphim,
Yet lose our love for God in Jesus Christ,
We will have traded an eternity
For several hundred million miles of space.
We must be careful not to lose our way
In this synthetic woods where we now live.
For then the products of technology
May seem to antiquate theology.

So we must speak with wisdom, fear, and
love,

With logic measured close and well aware
That only God can speak infallibly.

No matter what we do in earth or space,
Our life depends on hope and faith and
love.

And only Jesus Christ can give us those.

The Lord loved Mary, and Mary loved the
Lord.

Her way to love remains the only way.
The stars God made did not produce her
love.

The valleys and the mountains of the
earth;

The ruggedness of hills; the stillness of
A moonlit night; the burning orbs of space
Did not enable her to love the Lord.

The face of Christ; the color of His skin;
The legend of His ways did not give birth
To what she felt for God in Jesus Christ.

St. Mary Magdalene, a prostitute,
Loved God in Christ because He loved her
first.

Her love for God was proof that God for-
gives.

She was His child in spite of all her sin,
And love for God today is still the same.
We do not love the worlds He made;

We are inspired by the worlds He made
Because we tremble at His endless space,
Because we walk upon a thousand worlds,
Each greater and more varied than the last,
Because He autographed the galaxies.

We love no God for His technology;
No matter how stupendous or impressive
The universe may seem to all of us,

We only love the Lord if He loves us;
And we can feel His love as well on earth
As in a spaceship programed for the stars.

So if the world and man have conquered
space,

And if the scientists are prepared
For new adventures beyond our dreams;
The one adventure, the most important ad-
venture,

Is still the one which brought the Lord to
earth.

He did not come attired in a suit
Designed in order to preserve the air

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That only angels breathe; He did not come
 As if he were a stranger from afar.
 He came from that dimension still un-
 known
 And entered ours to be like us, to share
 Our sin and find a way to inner faith.
 No human venture to explore the stars
 Can match the venture of the Lord to
 earth.
 St. Mary Magdalene discovered that;
 She took God's grace, and that enabled her
 To call by name St. Michael and all angels;
 To blast off and explore eternity;
 To know and love whomever God has
 made
 To love the Lord and call Him by His
 name.
 She lived when no one traveled to the
 moon.
 She lived when men used chariots and
 swords,
 And yet through faith she stepped behind
 the stars.

The Lord loved Mary, and Mary loved the
 Lord.
 She does with all the other saints of God
 Anticipate the miracle of God's
 Technology: the resurrection of
 The dead, as well as everlasting life.
 So let us pave new highways into space,
 But not forget that God in Christ loves us
 And that He wants our love to come to
 Him.
 If we do that, our journey to the stars
 Will never blind us to the sins we have
 Or to the love we need from God in
 Christ.
 If we do that, then our technology
 Will never hinder our psychology.
 And even if we reach the farthest star,
 We still will know that nothing that we do
 Can match the age when Jesus comes
 again,
 For then the brilliance of the stars will fade
 Compared with Him who made them
 shine.