

the Ordination of women are a modern expression of this same anxiety. The Priest at the Altar stands in the place of Jesus so if the Priest is a woman she points us towards the feminine in God and many Christians have a real problem with the idea of there being anything feminine in God. In my view that's one reason why it's important that we should have female priests. "The da Vinci code" picks up this tension and suggests that it was because of the Church's inability to cope with the idea of femininity in God that she suppressed everything about Mary Magdalene. Did you notice there that I referred to the Church as 'she'? The Church has always been referred to as feminine and of course in the New Testament St. Paul presents us with this image of Jesus as the bridegroom and the Church as the bride. Christians are the children of that marriage between Christ and the Church. For many Christians then the Church herself has provided an image of femininity. For many others the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary has provided an opportunity for devotion to the feminine.

Many others though find real difficulty with it and Dan Brown has picked up on something troublesome for the Church here. I reckon that's a challenge we should hear. We do need to affirm the feminine in the life of the Church and in what it means to be God. I don't believe for one moment that Jesus gave Mary Magdalene the task of leading the Church, but I do believe that we have a long way to go before we can say that we truly affirm the feminine in God and in the life of the Church.

The final theme I want to touch on briefly is the idea of the blood of Christ coursing through human veins. No, Jesus didn't marry Mary Magdalene and didn't have a child but we are his blood and bone. As human beings like him we share the God given humanity that he embraced and are therefore his brothers and sisters but there's more than that. His blood was shed for us and for the forgiveness of our sins, his sacrifice is represented by blood and in sharing his blood in the sacrament of the Eucharist we are embracing the principle of sacrifice ourselves; we are taking into ourselves his life and his death; his resurrection; his spirit and so his blood does course through the veins of every Christian. We, the Church are called to be his presence in the world of today and in the end that's far more important than the idea that there might be an individual biologically descended from him.

So enjoy the novel and the film if you want. Don't close your mind to the real challenges, you'll get those in any work of art and the Church must be big enough to address them, but don't for heaven's sake allow yourself to be seduced by the factoids either. Christ died for you and rose for you; he loves Mary Magdalene, yes and St. Peter, and he loves you and he stands at your door and knocks and calls you and your life to be the place where the search for his presence in the world culminates.

Rev. Michael Camp

**What makes life dreary is absence of motive.
What makes life complicated is multiplicity of motive.
What makes life victorious is singleness of motive.**

George Eliot