

THE RISEN LORD APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE

The first person to see Jesus after His resurrection was Mary Magdalene. She is standing outside the empty tomb, weeping for her loss. Turning round she sees a figure, that she takes to be a gardener. But when Jesus speaks her name, she recognises him and cries out with joy. Jesus says "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead my brothers and tell them". Whereupon Mary goes to the disciples to proclaim the joyful news. This dramatic and moving moment has proved a popular subject with artists throughout the ages. Our first picture is by a fourteenth century Italian follower of Giotto di Bondone, and shows the influence of icon painting.



The second painting is by the Venetian artist, Titian, and from the early 16th century. Behind Mary is a village, while the background to Jesus is an open landscape stretching into the infinite distance. But the figures link the two: the curve of Christ's body continuing the slope of the inhabited hillside, while Mary continues the line of the tree that leads the observer into the far distance. Jesus draws back from Mary, while in a pose of great affection. He holds a hoe, reminding us of Mary's original misidentification.

The final picture is by the twentieth century artist, Graham Sutherland, and hangs in the chapel of Mary Magdalene in Chichester Cathedral. As in Titian's painting the background is divided into two realms, linked by the lines of the composition of the figures, and by the turns of the staircase. With one hand Jesus points the way he must go, while with the other he bestows a blessing. Jesus appears and testifies that he is risen: but Mary must return to the world to spread the joyful news.

