

Falling in love is one thing, staying in love quite another. The first is not necessarily our choice but the second definitely is: a matter of will, of desiring the one we love even after death and resurrection. For Mary Magdalene is doubly wounded here or, perhaps, one might even say, *thrice* wounded: at her first falling in love with Jesus, the arrow of love, and at his death on the cross and now again as he goes to the Father. And one might then say that three is indicative of always and of the nature of love as a perennial quest, never fulfilled in this life or the next: a search which goes on forever because it's the nature of love to be forever in need of renewal, part of the dynamic which goes on forever between Father Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus, then, as the one who brings us too into this dynamic and no more poignantly so than here in these words to Mary, first in his naming of her and sparking in her that hidden recognition of who he is and then almost immediately followed by the command, 'Do not cling to me' or, in some translations, 'Do not touch me'.

There's more to the journey, then, than this life only. It's an invitation to join Jesus in his forever passing over into the life of the Father who then becomes our Father too. He has to go in order for us to follow in the power or dynamic of the Spirit. 'Do not cling to me' could just as well be said of anything which we are tempted to hold onto instead – whether that be an issue, a person, or a Church. It's not Mary Magdalene who is being subversive here but Jesus.

Br John Mayhead
Monastery of Christ Our Saviour