

Thoughts on the Daily Word:

14th Week of Year. Monday 6th July. St Maria Goretti. Readings: Hosea 2:16,17-18,21-22; Psalm 144; Matthew 9:18-26.

Scripture is clearly largely written and defined by men. Nothing new there then! There are images of powerful women, even women judges could rule the ancient Israelite tribes. There were women prophets and women ancestors of the Davidic line, such as Ruth. We have also heard of some terrible women like Jezebel. Israel itself is often considered in feminine terms as a bride and sometimes castigated as an unfaithful wife. Here in Hosea we have the beautiful and moving love story played out with an unfaithful wife. So often the prophets were called to act out their prophecies, often with painful consequences, as in Ezekiel with the death of his wife. The prophet Hosea is prophesying in the last decades before the northern kingdom of Israel is wiped out by the Assyrians. It is a passionate love story between Hosea and someone likely to have been a temple prostitute who he attempts to draw away from the worship of Baal and back to a faithful relationship with the God of the Covenant. Often Israel is seen as a faithless bride who needs to be reminded of the love affair of her youth, with Yahweh in the desert, seen as a honeymoon time. This image, while beautiful in itself and so very human, nevertheless, placed women in a double bind. They were expected to be perfectly faithful and yet seen as potentially weak and vulnerable. Jesus seems to see women in a quite different light. In his community of disciples, women seem to have equal dignity and they are the one who do not flee from the cross. Mary of Magdala is the first witness to the resurrection of Jesus. In these healing stories it is a woman who is healed through reaching out in faith and a girl child who receives the gift of life.