

Daily Prayer

Saint Mary Magdalene

Wednesday, July 22, 2020

We enter into a time of quiet. We offer to God our selves and in the silence know that God embraces us as God's very own. We offer to God our hopes and our concerns through our prayers and in the silence listen for God. Today we remember Saint Mary Magdalene.

We begin by saying

If any serve me, the Father will honour them.

John 12.26

The First Reading

Soon afterwards Jesus went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

Luke 8.1-3

The Psalm

As the deer longs for the water brooks, *
so longs my soul for you, O God.

My soul is athirst for God, athirst for the living God; *
when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?

My tears have been my food day and night, *
while all day long they say to me,

"Where now is your God?"

I pour out my soul when I think on these things: *

how I went with the multitude and led them into the
house of God,

With the voice of praise and thanksgiving, *
among those who keep holy-day.

Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul? *
and why are you so disquieted within me?

Put your trust in God; *

for I will yet give thanks to him,
who is the help of my countenance, and my God.

My soul is heavy within me; *

therefore I will remember you from the land of Jordan,
and from the peak of Mizar among the heights of Hermon.

One deep calls to another in the noise of your cataracts; *
all your rapids and floods have gone over me.

Psalm 42.1-7

The Gospel Reading

We continue with the gospel reading and the reflection that follows. In silence, we ask what the readings have to say to us today. Is there something in the reflection that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?

'Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent

down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." ' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

John 20.1-18

The Reflection

Susan Haig

She stands tall with the greatest figures in the Jesus story. John prepares the way in the wilderness, Peter is the rock on which the Church is built, and Paul is its first scholar and systematic theologian. But Mary of Magdala is the first to receive and proclaim the good news of Jesus' resurrection. Among women only Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus, has a more important role as *theotokos*, the God-bearer.

But I sometimes wonder if Mary of Magdala can also be understood as a lesser and metaphoric God-bearer, for she evangelizes the first evangelists. She bears witness that the teacher from Galilee, newly-crucified and buried, is indeed the Son of Man as he had claimed. Their friend and leader is truly their Risen Lord and Saviour. Stop and think about it for a moment: of all the people to whom Christ could have chosen to appear for the first time, to whom he could have entrusted his preposterous and joyful message, it is she—not Peter, not John, not anyone amongst the 12, not even his beloved mother. Mary Magdalene is the first. And call me crazy if you will, but audaciously I believe that were it not for the specific time and place of the Incarnation, a time and place deeply rooted in and imbued through and through with patriarchy and masculine normativity, she not Peter might have been the first Pope!

But I am getting ahead of myself. We do not have a lot of detail about her and her role in the Jesus movement. But what we do know is highly significant. We first meet her in the story Luke tells. In a tiny aside at the beginning of chapter eight, we learn that some women accompany Jesus and the 12 as they wind their way through the cities and villages of Galilee. Many of these women are not named, but of the three who are Mary of Magdala heads the

list. (In fact, just as Peter almost always is named first in a list of male disciples, Mary almost always is named first when the women are mentioned.) These women play a very important part in Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom: they are the wealthy patrons who dig into their pockets to help put food and drink on the table and keep the company moving. In addition, Mary is not described as someone's wife or daughter, as is usually the case with Scriptural references to women, but simply as Mary called Magdalene because she hails from the village of Magdala. All of this to say that she is a somebody in that world, an independent woman of means, a person in her own right. An audacious and rare status in First century Palestine.

But despite her material prosperity she is a person who has known frailty and pain, probably in the form of mental illness. Luke notes that these women had been cured of "evil spirits and infirmities." Like so many other people Jesus stopped to notice and heal, these women's hearts are now overflowing with gratitude, so much so that they turn from their old lives to follow and support the One who makes all things new. Mary of Magdala, Luke tells us, had seven demons go out from her, ancient biblical code for a very serious disease.

That disturbance, however, has nothing whatsoever to do with her alleged profession as a sex trade worker. In the first place, then as now, most women found themselves practising the trade out of economic necessity. Abandoned and desperate, without the means to support themselves and often children, they allowed themselves to be exploited. That is not Mary's status. Our tradition has mischaracterized her for centuries as a result of one simple but influential homily preached by Pope Gregory I in 591, wherein he conflated her with the sinful but repentant unnamed woman Luke describes in chapter seven who anoints Jesus' feet with her tears.

One can only wonder whether this was a deliberate exegetical act on the part of the Gregory, or an interpretation influenced by an unconscious misogynistic desire, either or both intended to silence her apostolic voice, or at least diminish its power.

But despite this interpretive faux pas, Mary Magdalene's influence has always endured. It could not be otherwise. Her love for the man Jesus was too ardent. According to all four Gospels, it is this fearless and faithful love that enables her and the other women who followed Jesus from Galilee to follow him to the bitter end. It is this fearless and faithful love that enables her and the some of the other women to venture out on the third day to the tomb, at a time all of his other friends had fled to the hills. As John tells the story, Mary is so eager and unafraid that she sets out before the dawn's first light. Finding the stone removed from the tomb, she leaves to tell Peter and another disciple. Some time later she returns there, first to see two angels and then to encounter a stranger. Heartbroken and desolate, she weeps. But her sorrow turns to joy in a flash of recognition, when the man who resurrected her broken life stands before her as the Resurrection and the Life. And then she does what any of us would do: she throws herself into his strong familiar embrace, as she has done so many times before, but now to hold on forever and never let go. But this cannot be. For there is work to do. She is commissioned to go to her brothers and make the announcement: "I have seen the Lord."

We cannot know but likely the power of that moment in her life was even greater than that in which Jesus healed her of her seven demons. To be trusted above all other of his friends, to be chosen for the first encounter with Glory, speaks both to the purity of her character and the love Jesus felt for her. And thus her love for the risen Christ continues, in Paul's words, "to urge her on" as the movement grows and the Good News of the Resurrection spreads.

While not named specifically, Luke mentions in the first chapter of Acts, that on the day Matthias is chosen to replace Judas, the 12 gather in an upper room along with “certain women,” which presumably includes Mary Magdalene. Similarly in the very next chapter, Luke relates that on the day of Pentecost “they were altogether in one place,” a group which again would have most likely included her. She is not specifically mentioned again in Luke’s account in Acts, but many other women with significant leadership roles are and so it is a viable guess that she remains active in the Church’s evolution.

So, we give hearty thanks on this Mary of Magdala’s feast day for her faithful and passionate example of Christian discipleship. Pray God, may we be like her. Wounded healer. Cheerful giver of her bounty. Fearless friend. Apostle to the apostles. Founding member of the Church. Bearer of the Good News. May our love be equal to hers.

When the time is right, we conclude our time of silence with the canticle

The Canticle ~ A Song of God’s Love

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; ♦
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, ♦
for God is love.

In this the love of God was revealed among us, ♦
that God sent his only Son into the world,
so that we might live through him.

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, ♦
and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.

Beloved, since God loved us so much, ♦
we ought also to love one another.

For if we love one another, God abides in us, ♦
and God's love will be perfected in us.

1 John 4.7-11, 12b

*We continue in prayer for those people and situations that we hold up before God (The Intercessions)
and continue with the concluding collect, the Lord's prayer and the closing sentences.*

The Intercessions

Let us pray to the Lord, saying, **Lord, have mercy.**

For the whole People of God, that each one may be a true and faithful servant of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For those drawing near to the light of faith, that the Lord will bring them to true knowledge of himself, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For our families and friends, that the Lord will give them joy and satisfaction in all that they do, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For those who are lonely, sick, hungry, persecuted, or ignored, that the Lord will comfort and sustain them, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For our country, that the Lord will help us to contribute to its true growth and well-being, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the whole human family, that we may live together in justice and peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

We conclude our prayers

Almighty God,
whose Son restored Mary Magdalene
to health of mind and body
and called her to be a witness to his resurrection:
forgive our sins and heal us by your grace,
that we may serve you in the power of his risen life;
who is alive and reigns with you, and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

[let us pray as our Saviour taught us,]

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen

We conclude

May God grant to the world justice, truth and peace. Amen.
Alleluia.

Credits:

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