

Bulletin Article for Seventeenth Sunday of OTA

July 26,2020

This past week our Church celebrated a very special Feast Day with the celebration of St Mary Magdalene. As we honor all the great Apostles (the Twelve chosen by Jesus to continue His Mission) and recognize that their lives of faith and witness formed the foundation upon which our current Church has been built, it is equally important to recognize and honor St. Mary Magdalene who was a loyal follower of Jesus. While not present at the Last Supper and Gethsemane, she *was* present at the Crucifixion of Jesus, and while all other disciples went into hiding after the Passion, it was Mary Magdalene who bravely went to the tomb early on the morning of the First Day of the Week “while it was still dark”, to anoint the body of Jesus. It was there that she was blessed to be the *first* human to witness the Risen Jesus, and received from Jesus the instruction to bring this Good News to St Peter and the others. Because the word “Apostle” means “one who is sent”, Mary was “sent” by Jesus to deliver the News of His Resurrection thereby earning her the title of “Apostle to the Apostles”. What follows is an article that I found which offers some insights about St. Mary Magdalene and perhaps will be some food for spiritual thought:

St. Mary Magdalene is one of the greatest saints of the Bible and a legendary example of God's mercy and grace. The precise dates of her birth and death are unknown, but we do know she was present with Christ during his public ministry, death and resurrection. She is mentioned at least a dozen times in the Gospels. Mary Magdalene has long been regarded as a prostitute or sexually immoral in western Christianity, but this is not supported in the scriptures. It is believed she was a Jewish woman who lived among Gentiles, living as they did.

The Gospels agree that Mary was originally a great sinner. Jesus cast seven demons out of her when he met her. After this, she told several women she associated with and these women also became followers. There is also debate over if Mary Magdalene is the same unnamed woman, a sinner, who weeps and washes Jesus' feet with her hair in the Gospel of John. Scholars are skeptical this is the same person.

Despite the scholarly dispute over her background, what she did in her subsequent life, after meeting Jesus, is much more significant. She was certainly a sinner whom Jesus saved, giving us an example of how no person is beyond the saving grace of God. During Jesus' ministry, it is believed that Mary Magdalene followed him, part of a semi-permanent entourage who served Jesus and his Disciples.

Mary likely watched the crucifixion from a distance along with the other women who followed Christ during His ministry. Mary was present when Christ rose from the dead, visiting his tomb to

anoint his body only to find the stone rolled away and Christ, very much alive, sitting at the place they laid Him. She was the first witness to His resurrection.

After the death of Christ, a legend states that she remained among the early Christians. After fourteen years, she was allegedly put into a boat by Jews, along with several other saints of the early Church, and set adrift without sails or oars. The boat landed in southern France, where she spent the remaining years of her life living in solitude, in a cave.

St. Mary Magdalene's feast day is July 22. She is the patroness of converts, repentant sinners, sexual temptation, pharmacists, tanners and women, and many other places and causes.

Mary has become one of the most celebrated of all Jesus' disciples. Pope Benedict XVI has said about her:

"The story of Mary of Magdala reminds us all of a fundamental truth. A disciple of Christ is one who, in the experience of human weakness, has had the humility to ask for his help, has been healed by him and has set out following closely after him, becoming a witness of the power of his merciful love that is stronger than sin and death."

**~Fr. Tom Gaughan,
csc**