

JULY 22, 2020
Feast of St. Mary Magdalene
John 20: 1, 11-18

“I HAVE SEEN THE LORD.”

Today, we are celebrating the feast of Mary of Magdala or Mary Magdalene. When I first arrived here at St. Peter’s, I noticed the rocks at the back of this church, not 12 rocks but 13 big rocks representing 12 apostles and Mary Magdalene. Maybe the basis of this is our gospel for today: Mary Magdalene was given the privilege the “first person” to see the Risen Lord. She was an apostle because she stood at the foot of the cross and one of the women who came to the tomb early morning of the resurrection. What can we see on her in our gospel today? She loved the Lord so much and she dedicated all her life for Jesus and His work. “The gospel reading for her feast which we have just read portrays her as a woman whose devotion to Jesus brought her to the tomb early on that first Sunday morning. Her heartfelt devotion to Jesus also left her outside the tomb weeping tears of loss when she discovered the body of Jesus was not there.”¹ When Jesus called her by her name, Mary instantly acknowledges the voice of her Master and knows it is Jesus who is calling her because “He calls his own sheep by name... The sheep follow him because they recognise His voice.”²

Mary Magdalene was one of the most misunderstood personalities in the gospels. She was considered prostitute, a woman caught in adultery or even the woman who wipes the feet of Jesus with her hair and perfume, an unclean woman not deserving of love and to be loved. But Jesus saw on her what is beyond the human eye can see. He saw in her that she can change and be better given a chance. “Mary Magdalene probably had to endure negative responses from others. Who would want to go near a madwoman? Parents would warn their children to avoid her in case they too got possessed by a demon, like her. Yet Jesus reached out to her in kindness, reached out to

¹ www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie

² John 10: 3-4 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

the real Mary, the woman behind the facade people saw because of the tales that had been told about her. Mary responded by devoting the rest of her life to following Jesus and supporting His ministry, no matter what it might cost, financially or emotionally.”³

My brothers and sisters, everyone of us can be Mary Magdalene, sinner but willing to ask forgiveness and open for change, away from the Lord but now love the Lord more than anything else in this world, and dedicated to obey and follow His words. We sometimes say that we sought our Lord but in reality, we are the one who are being sought by the Lord. He searches us even before we search Him. This saint is teaching us: sinner can be holy and saint if we only accept and love the Lord. Let us imitate Mary Magdalene, sinner like us but come to Jesus for healing and forgiveness, and love Jesus even more. Like her, Jesus will always love us without any conditions and not because of our sinfulness but of our openness and willingness to change. Also, like her, we are sent out and called to be messengers of Good News of the Resurrection to others even if for them we are not worthy to be called disciples of Jesus. Sometimes we judge other of their sinfulness, but if we look at it, we are more sinful than them, we are just hiding it through our arrogance and fault finding. So, let us therefore ask the intercession of Mary Magdalene not to be discouraged in spite of our sinfulness but rather, answer the call of Jesus to be His disciples and to be herald and messengers of love, healing, forgiveness, and hope to those who go astray, overburdened, and lost. May we constantly ask the Lord to forgive us, strengthen us so that we may continue serving Him amidst our weaknesses and sins. St. Mary Magdalene, pray for us. Amen.

³ www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie