

## **Homily For the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, Disciple of the Lord - Year II**

### **St Peter's 8:30am Mass - Friday, July 22, 2022**

**Song of Songs 3:1-4** "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?."

**Psalm 63:1-8** "I seek you. My soul thirsts for you."

**John 20:1,11-18** "Tell me where you have carried him."

### **She Saw the Lord**

#### **Magdala**

Fr. Juan Solana felt called to build a retreat center on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Now in Israel, because there are so many ancient ruins, it is not easy to get permission to dig. After this lengthy process, in a historically and archaeologically rich area, very shortly after construction began, surprise, surprise, they discovered some ancient walls. These the first synagogue discovered in the area where Jesus walked. The excavation uncovered a synagogue on Jesus' route between Nazareth and Capernaum and Bethsaida and the Mount of multiplication of loaves.

In one of the greatest discoveries in all of Israel, of a 1st century city, they found the Magdala stone, the oldest stone carved menorah, modelled after the one in the temple. The first complete first century town discovered in Israel. Usually there are layers of cultures. But this one, literally just below the surface, is untouched since the first century. A coin minted in 29 AD shows an impression of Jesus teaching in the synagogues during his public life, as recorded in Matthew 4:23 and Mark 1:39.

In the center of the synagogue stood the unique Magdala Stone, an elaborately-carved stone which shows what experts believe is the earliest carved representation of the Great Temple in Jerusalem, which was destroyed in the year 70 AD by the Roman army. Depicting a menorah that is thought to have been that which graced the Temple before it was destroyed, the site is now seen as one of the most significant in the whole country because the Magdala stone represents

the oldest known sculpture of a menorah. Only an estimated ten percent of the entire ancient town has been uncovered to this point, with archaeologists working just to the side of the retreat center. There is a modern church for 300, with an altar in the shape of a boat, with the water behind, symbolizing Jesus still teaching from the boat today.

## **Mary of Magdala**

Until this discovery, St. Mary of Magdala was known as being from a town which had not been discovered. This is one of those moments in Christian history where faith meets identifiable reality. Mary is not the imagination of a Gospel writer. She is a real person from a real place. Mary was a friend and devoted follower of Jesus Christ. She had been a woman out of whom Jesus exorcised seven demons. She has a special place among the Lord's disciples and is mentioned several times in the Gospels. She stood at the foot of the Cross with St. John and the Blessed Mother, and went the next morning to Christ's tomb to anoint his body. As a reward for her great love and faithfulness. She is the first recorded witness of Jesus' Resurrection. It was Mary Magdalene who informed the twelve Apostles that Jesus rose from the dead. For this she is called 'Apostle to the Apostles'. According to the Eastern tradition, she went to Ephesus with the Virgin Mary and died there. One of the most popular saints of all time. Also known as Mary of Bethany.

Much more than this, Mary is the messenger of the most important good news of all time. I suppose this is arguable. There was the annunciation by an angel to Mary, the mother of the Lord, that she would bear the Messiah to the world. There was Jesus announcing his ministry, reading from the scroll of Isaiah at the synagogue in Nazareth. There was the voice, at his baptism, of the Father from heaven, announcing Jesus promise as the Lamb of God, the beloved son. In that line of great announcements, there is Mary, after meeting Jesus at the tomb, announcing to the rest, "I have seen the Lord. She was chosen to tell it.

The evangelist says that, initially, she did not recognize him. And she took him for the gardener. But in the calling of her name she recognized him. It's like the

Emmaus disciples, who recognized him in the breaking of the bread. So, there is something profoundly comparable between the Eucharistic presence and the hearing of one's name spoken by the Lord.

### **Song of Songs**

In the Song of Songs, the image of a bride seeks her beloved with all her soul. This is an echo of the great Shema. Hear O Israel, the Lord is your God, the Lord alone. The psalmist also echoes this: My soul thirsts for you. Then on the cross, Jesus thirsts for our love, which is really a thirsting for our love.

### **Call To Action**

At the dawn of the Resurrection, Mary looked for Jesus, found the risen Jesus. That morning, Jesus Christ revealed to her the most important fact of our faith: that she was also God's beloved daughter.

Pope Francis asks us to imagine "How beautiful it is to think that the first appearance of the Risen One happened in such a personal way! That there is someone who knows us, who sees our suffering and disappointment, who is moved by us, and calls us by name."

We, Christians, should identify ourselves with this great woman, Mary of Magdala. She followed Jesus' path, she listened to his Word, and Christ reciprocated her by granting her the historic privilege of being the person whom Christ's feat of resurrection was first communicated to. Today, there is no greater invitation than for each of us to have such a profound meeting with the risen Lord that we will not be able to contain ourselves from shouting: "I have seen the Lord."

## **Key Scripture Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *The Lord said to Mary Magdalene, "Go to my brothers and tell them I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."*

**Collect:** *O God, whose only begotten son entrusted Mary Magdalene before all others with announcing the resurrection, grant that through her intercession we may proclaim the living Christ.*

**Song of Songs:** *The bride speaks of her beloved: I sought him whom my soul loves. The sentinels found me. I asked: Have you seen him whom my soul loves? Scarcely had I passed them, when I found him whom my soul loves.*

**Psalm 63:** *O God, you are my God. I seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Your steadfast love is better than life. My lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live. I will lift up my hands and call on your name. My soul clings to . Your right hand upholds me.*

**John:** *Early on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and she saw two angels in white. She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him." She turned and saw Jesus standing there, but did not know it was him. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where and I will come and take him." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him, "Rabbouni!" Jesus said to her, "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!"*