

Homily: July 22, 2024

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Today we celebrate the apostle of apostles—Mary Magdalene. She challenges us to be in a loving relationship with Jesus and to bravely proclaim the Risen Christ to others. Sometimes our spirit of life, words and actions proclaim Christ alive, and sometimes sparingly. We acknowledge God’s compassion, praying, “Lord, have mercy!”

Traditionally, Mary Magdalene has been seen as one of the closest disciples to Jesus. In the movie *Jesus Christ Superstar*, she sings “I don’t know how to love him . . .” Mary is baffled by how much she loves Jesus. The first reading this morning from the *Song of Songs* captures a similar theme—a love deep beyond understanding.

As happened to Mary, Jesus knows us and calls us by our name. A name, especially in the Hebrew culture, represents the essence of the person. A name can be the tip of the iceberg of our deepest selves.

We were baptized into the names and essence of the Holy Trinity persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As a consequence of our baptism, our deepest selves are rooted in a loving relationship with Jesus, the Son mentioned in the Trinity. That love relationship is far beyond romantic love. In her song, she speaks of how meeting Jesus has changed her beyond what she could imagine. She is even scared of where her love for him will take her.

Though the words of her song are not biblical, they express the vastness of the transformation she experienced after Jesus freed her of seven evil spirits. According to biblical scholars, she has been wrongly portrayed as a prostitute, as intimated in the film *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Her new life included sacrificing for the sake of Jesus’ journey and helping fulfill the needs of Jesus and his disciples.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke mention her first among the three women who prepared spices to apply to his corpse early on the first day of the week. The evangelists depict Mary as the first person to tell the disbelieving apostles that he had risen from the dead.

The calls and requests we may hear from Mary Magdalene’s story are:
--Love Jesus with your whole being. Do whatever it takes so that Jesus is familiar and challenging, and I want to respect and obey his word and example.

--Don't cling to a limited kind of Jesus. The Risen Jesus is boundless now. We can listen to the Risen Christ when he—his risen Spirit—speaks through a gardener, a friend, a confidante, a spouse, or a neighbor.

--Proclaim Jesus Risen, whether people believe you and me or not. Proclaim Christ Risen even when others may think we are being silly busying ourselves with such a belief, such a story.

May we know Jesus so well, that we can say with Mary Magdalene, "I have seen the Risen Christ." "I love him."