

Mary Magdalene – July 22, 2022

Judith 9:11-14

2 Cor 5:14-18

John 20:11-18

Psalm 42:1-7

Names in the New Testament repeat themselves and sometimes become hard to sort out. How many people are there named James? There are also numerous Johns and Marys. But often one or two with a particular name become so well known that it is easy to identify them. John the Baptist – no other John comes close. Mary, the mother of Jesus stands out also. As well as Mary Magdalene who occupies a unique place in the story of Jesus.

As well known as Mary Magdalene is, there are still blank or fuzzy spots in her biography. The seven demons that were banished. Were they physical – convulsing her, throwing her into fires, making her dangerous to herself and others? Were the demons mental – the kind that are even harder to ignore - ones that eat away at you and are always with you? Was she ostracized because of her demons forced to live on the fringes of society? Did she seek out Jesus and ask for relief or did he notice her and her suffering and offer healing? Was she young or mature? Was she invited to join the disciples or was that her choice?

Even with those omissions, we know much of her story. She was loyal, part of the inner circle, faithful and willing to put her own safety aside to serve the Lord. She supported Jesus' mission with her whole being and with her wealth.

Our Gospel anthem today asks the question – “Tell us Mary, what did you see on the way?”

This question is really directed to Easter morning but applies equally to all her journey with Jesus. What did she go out to find? And did she find what she sought? Big questions in anyone's life but bigger still in that life and culture. What if your seeking defied all the expectations of your society and culture? A single woman setting out on her own to follow an itinerant preacher. Not having a

husband to rely on and forsaking a permanent home. Not knowing how or where you would spend the night or where the next meal would come from. It takes a lot to feed and shelter that many people – even if you only consider the inner circle. Was she burning her bridges in choosing that lifestyle?

Tell us Mary, what did you see on the way? Others as hungry as you for Jesus' teaching?

She overcame any obstacles put in her way. She remained faithful on the journey – faithful to the end. For her, there was no wavering in her relationship with Jesus. No denial of him in the early hours before the crucifixion. Walking with him to the cross. Standing at the cross not afraid to show her loyalty. Waiting days until the funeral rites could be performed.

Tell us Mary, what did you see on the way?

Nothing could have prepared her for the empty tomb. The disbelief and the confusion. The presence of this gardener. Where had he come from?

To go from despair to the bliss of recognition.

Tell us Mary, what did you see on the way? I saw the glory of the risen Christ; I saw his empty tomb.

What do we see on the way? Our preconceived assumptions? Only loss and sadness? Or do we see possibilities – the hope of rejoicing and resurrection. Let the way we travel be open to the unexpected – the way of new life.