

*Greetings to you!*

Today is the 9th Sunday after Pentecost and we give thanks to God for the devotion shown by Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene was one of a large group of women who provided for Jesus and the Twelve out of their own savings (Luke 8:2). Luke tells us that the group included some women who have been healed of evil spirits and one of these was Mary from whom seven demons had gone out. Luke shows this as an indication of a serious condition and how exorcism had been performed on her, most probably by Jesus himself. Mary was with the band of Galilean women who accompanied Jesus to Jerusalem, witnessed his crucifixion from a distance, observed the tomb where his body was laid, went to the tomb with burial spices which they had prepared and found the tomb empty. She also experienced the startling appearance of two men in dazzling white apparel (Luke 23:49, 55-56 and 24:1-9). Mary was one of the women disciples who followed Jesus.

Luke tells us that Mary Magdalene was freed from the presence of seven demons. Demonic possession can be a terrible experience. The demons usually take control of the body of the host and control it. These demons are evil forces who take possession of human bodies in order to manipulate them. The number 7 could either be seven literal demons or it could be a great number because seven was used as a symbolic number of completeness. Multiple possession of the same person can also happen. These demons can only be chased out by the power of God.

Mary Magdalene was set free from this terrible bondage by Jesus. The healing is not described in detail anywhere, but is mentioned in summary form in Mark 16:9. It shows that this incident had taken place earlier as people would refer to her as the woman who was delivered from seven demons. It was the compassion of Jesus that led him to heal her. Mary decided to serve Jesus because he had broken all her bondages and had set her free. The name Magdalene suggests that she was from the region of Mary Magdala, a town on the Sea of Galilee's Western shore about 3 miles North of Tiberius. She is not the immoral woman mentioned in Luke 7 who anointed Jesus. It is only in the 6th century that Pope Gregory in one of his sermons equated Mary Magdalene with the sinner in Luke 7:37. The bible nowhere talks about Mary Magdalene as a woman who was a 'sinner'.

With the release from her demon possession Mary becomes a new creation in Christ. Paul writing to the Corinthians says that, 'if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old things have passed away and everything has become new.' Mary was reconciled to Christ through her healing experience. Mary did not stop with a miracle she experienced, but went on to believe in Christ and became his follower.

Mary stayed faithful to Christ till the end of his life. She watched the crucifixion and went to anoint the body early in the morning. It is there she meets with the risen Christ. She is the first apostle as she carries the good news to the rest of the disciples. Mary is an apostle, commissioned by the risen Christ to proclaim the good news that Christ was risen. We too are called to be faithful to Christ till the end of our lives and stay devoted to him.