

Meditations: Easter Tuesday

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on Easter Tuesday.

- Mary Magdalen finds the tomb empty
- The risen Jesus calls her by her name
- The joy of the first announcement

THE CITY of Magdala was situated on the shores of Lake Genesareth. Jesus spent many pleasant moments there and worked many miracles. It was the home of Mary Magdalen, one of the women who followed our Lord and who He had freed from seven

demons. Her faithfulness led her to Calvary, where she stood alongside Jesus' Mother Mary on that Friday of the Passion. The following Sunday she rose very early, before sunrise, and headed for the tomb where the body of Jesus had been placed. Her love overcame any fear, for she had the strength of one who loves and wants to love even more.

We can imagine her walking quickly through the city gate to avoid curious eyes, carrying a bag with aromatic herbs and winding cloths to anoint the dead body of our Lord and finish the work of embalming. The way she takes passes close by Mount Calvary, stirring up in her heart the memory of all of Friday's suffering. On reaching the tomb, Mary is surprised to discover that no soldiers are guarding it. What is more, the stone covering the entrance has been rolled aside. Amid her tears, she looks inside and sees two angels in

the empty tomb who ask her, *Woman, why are you weeping? (Jn 20:13)*. Mary's answer is very moving: *Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.*

She deeply misses Jesus. She cannot bear to lose sight of Him. Mary's tears are an example of courage and tenderness. The person she loved most in the world had died cruelly and now his body has disappeared. She would not even have the consolation of anointing his body. On Saturday her thoughts had often turned to the tomb. How she longed to show Him her affection when the first light of day appeared on Sunday morning! Mary Magdalen's tears teach us that true fear of God is the fear of losing Him, of not being aware of his closeness, of letting his demands and his graces pass us by. As Saint Josemaría often said,

“Without Jesus, we are not going well.”^[1] He is everything for us.

“THE TOMB is empty! Mary Magdalen cries, her face bathed in tears. She needs the Master. She has gone there to be consoled by being near Him, to keep Him company, because without our Lord nothing is worthwhile. Mary perseveres in prayer; she looks for Him everywhere and thinks only of Him. My children, seeing such faithfulness, God lets Himself be overcome.”^[2]

Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek? (Jn 20:15), Christ himself asks her when He meets her a short time later. At first, Mary mistakes Him for the garden caretaker. In those moments of confusion and tears, it was hard to see clearly. And so she answers: Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him

away. The difficulty in doing so never occurs to her; nothing can restrain her love. "Poor Magdalen! Worn from Good Friday, wearied by Holy Saturday, with life dwindled to a shadow and strength weakened to a thread, she would 'take Him away.'"^[3] —

It is only when Jesus, with his own very special tone of voice, pronounces her name, "Mary!" (*Jn* 20:16), that she becomes aware that Christ in his glorified Body is standing before her. "How nice it is to think that the first apparition of the Risen Christ took place in such a personal way! To think there is someone who knows us, who sees our suffering and disappointment, who is moved by us and calls us by our name."^[4] — The reward for Mary Magdalen's faithful love is contemplating the beauty of the Resurrected Lord. She has taken great risks for Jesus; she has ardently

sought Him and our Lord has more than repaid her. Overcome by emotion, she throws herself at his feet and grabs hold of them. It is an eloquent gesture; she doesn't want to risk losing Christ again. She has suffered so much seeing the humiliation of her Lord, thinking she had lost him forever. "What is striking is the tenderness with which Jesus treated this woman, exploited and judged by so many. In Jesus she found at last a pure eye, a heart capable of loving without exploiting. In the gaze and heart of Jesus she received the revelation of God-Love."^[5]

MARY MAGDALEN'S path to her meeting with the glorious Christ is, to a certain extent, similar to that of all Christians: humbly picking oneself up after a fall; searching for our Lord without becoming discouraged; looking after others; accompanying Jesus when the Cross unexpectedly

appears; not losing hope even when everything seems dark. Because Jesus is alive!

As with Mary, the distinctive and very personal tone of Jesus' voice awakens us and takes away any discouragement. Being attentive to his voice, listening closely to what Christ wants to tell us at each moment, transforms our daily life into a constant opportunity to love. "Humanity needs women and men like this: able tirelessly to have recourse to divine mercy, loyally standing at the foot of the Cross, quick to hear – amid the ordinary duties of daily life – their own name spoken by the Risen Christ."^[6] Mary is the first of the disciples to see the Risen Lord. Her tears of suffering quickly become tears of joy. Jesus entrusts the first announcement of the great news to this faithful woman: *Do not hold me ... but go to my brethren and say to them: I am*

ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God (Jn 20:18). Her mourning has changed to unimaginable joy.

Mary returns running to Jerusalem. She carries a message of hope for Christ's disciples and for the whole world. The Lord is alive! He has risen! In her heart there now reigns the ardent joy of Easter, a joy that flows from an empty tomb and spreads throughout the whole world. Together with the Mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalen is now one of the most blessed women on earth.

^[1] Cf. Javier Echevarría, “María Magdalena, cercana al Maestro,” in *Alfa y Omega*, 21 July 2016.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, Meditation, 22 July 1964.

^[3] Venerable Fulton Sheen, *Life of Christ*, ch. 54

^[4] Pope Francis, General Audience, 17 May 2017.

^[5] Benedict XVI, Homily, 17 June 2007.

^[6] Javier Echevarría, “María Magdalena, cercana al Maestro,” in *Alfa y Omega*, 21 July 2016.

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