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July 22: Saint Mary Magdalene

Gospel for July 22nd, feast of Saint Mary Magdalene, and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn* 20:1-2; 11-18)

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to

my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Commentary

In the Song of Songs we read: “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned” (*Song* 8:7).

If anyone in exchange for love gives something that isn’t love, they haven’t given anything. That is what Saint Mary Magdalene teaches us today: that, as Saint Josemaría said, “the only real love is God’s Love!” (*The Way*, 417).

The preface that the Church uses to praise God in today's Mass summarizes the life of this holy woman. The Risen Christ "appeared in the garden and revealed himself to Mary Magdalene, who had loved him in life, witnessed him dying on the Cross, sought him as he lay in the tomb, and was the first to adore him, newly risen from the dead. He honored her with the office of being an apostle to the Apostles, so that the good news of new life might reach the ends of the earth."

"If you truly want to know a person, don't ask them what they think but what they love." This well-known saying, attributed to Saint Augustine, helps us to realize that we know everything important about Mary Magdalene. Perhaps the only specific thing that we know about her life is that Jesus had cast out seven demons from her (cf. *Lk* 8:2). But we discover the fundamental thing in the crucial

days of our Lord's passion and death. Mary refused to be separated from Him either when He was on the Cross or in the tomb. And therefore God united Himself to her forever in the joy of the Resurrection.

It is striking that the only woman who shares and surpasses all of these traits of the Magdalene bears the same name: Mary, the Mother of Jesus. For these two women were chosen by God for a specific mission: to live only in order to love Him. And so that the fire of love in their hearts would leave a path clearly marked for all of us who would come afterwards.

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