

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook. The rocks were split open. Many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. The Centurion, trembling, proclaimed “Truly this was the Son of God.” And standing afar, faithfully keeping watch at the crucifixion of the Lord, ministering to Him in His time of need, was Mary Magdalene.

Earlier, a pious, repentant woman, upon hearing that Jesus was in the house of a Pharisee, entered the house, and assumed the position of a slave at the feet of the Christ. Weeping, she washed His feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and kissing His feet, anointed Him with fragrant oil. Although she is not named in the account, the church has long held the woman to be Mary Magdalene.

The Pharisee was quick to condemn the sinful woman. *Lex semper accusat.* The Pharisee thought to himself that Jesus could not be from God. The proof was there: He allowed a sinner, even a woman, to touch Him.

But the Pharisee’s conclusion wasn’t a careful exegesis of Scripture. It was a sinful anthropomorphism, a fallen man projecting his prejudices and his corruption onto God. He considered himself to be clean, and the woman to be unclean. “God must be like me”, he pridefully reasoned. So by Pharisaical reasoning One who allowed the unclean to draw nigh unto Him could not be from God.

The Pharisee was swift to judge, swift to condemn. The heart of love isn’t like that. But how like him every sinner has been. For it is not righteousness, but sin that disparages others, becomes angry at others, judging their motives, condemning them, sometimes silently, as the Pharisee, and other times out loud, publicly, that others hear the evidence of sinfulness.

Each of us also has committed silent blasphemies, assuming on some level that we are more desirable to God than others, that God must be as we imagine Him, or He cannot be God. Which, of course, is blasphemy.

Learn then, O you of Adam’s flesh, as the Lord bade Peter, from the only saint that the Church calls “penitent” – Mary Magdalene. For responding to the blasphemy of the Pharisee our Lord tells Peter a parable about debt and forgiveness. Peter answers rightly. Then the Lord spoke strong Words of Law to Peter, holding up the sinful woman as an example to the chief of the Apostles.

To Peter He said “...you gave me no water..., ...you gave me no kiss..., you did not anoint My head with oil...” But the woman did. And what she did, she did in love, the love that comes only from faith, faith responding to the Love of God in Christ Jesus. For where there is true love, there is faith, and there is forgiveness of sins.

Love keeps no record of wrongs. Love covers all sins. Against love there is no law. So Christ keeps no record of wrongs. Christ covers all sins. Christ came to fulfill the Law. Christ, who is Love Incarnate, forgave the woman her sins. From her there is much to learn. Would that we could all do as she did.

Mary Magdalene is not named in the account of the penitent woman. She is named, however, as the woman from whom our Lord cast out seven demons. Whatever attributions the church makes to her, it is certain that she was a lost and condemned sinner. She, like all fallen men, like you, was a subject of the devil and defenseless against the whims of his evil angels.

As the woman from whom seven demons were cast, her exorcism was like unto the exorcism you too have undergone. For upon you did the Pastor place his hand, and command in the stead and by the command of our Lord, "Depart, thou unclean spirit, and make way for the Holy Spirit. Receive the sign of the holy Cross both upon your forehead and upon your breast, to mark you as one redeemed of Christ the Crucified." And then, by the Words of the Lord's Prayer and the Gospel according to St. Mark, did God work in you.

Out of you was cast the evil spirit, as, by God's grace, it pleased Him to grant you the indwelling of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Spirit of the Living God. So you who owed much, you who had nothing with which to repay, by God's grace you are forgiven much. You are forgiven because those tear washed feet were also stained by Holy Blood. You are forgiven because that fragrantly anointed brow was wounded with thorns. You are forgiven because those feet that brought the Good News of salvation were pierced with a spike.

On the cross, they gave Him no water. There did the One who owed no debt die for your great debt. There do we learn to know God aright, not as we might imagine Him, not as we might design Him, but on the cross we see God as He truly is. There do we see the God that allows sinners to touch Him, the God that covered Himself in your sins to redeem you.

As David's son wrote, the True Son of David, the Bridegroom, has found you, the one He loves, and He holds you and will not let you go. He brings you, His Holy Bride, into this chamber, He sets a seal upon your heart by writing His saving Word upon it. His love is stronger than sin. His love, stirred up and awakened in His only-begotten Son, is stronger than death.

This day the same Christ that eats with sinners, the same Christ served by Mary Magdalene serves you. This day, in mercy, at this Supper, He invites you not to stand at His feet as a slave, but rather as His redeemed to eat His Body and drink His Blood. So rejoice, dear Christian. Your many sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.

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