

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Jul 22nd 2015

Memorial of Saint Mary Magdalene

During the rainy days of summer I have been working on sorting photographs. Photos from all stages of my life. Photos which were given to me and those which were taken by me. Me as a chubby toddler being doted on by my parents. Pictures of me straddling my bicycle with the back baskets filled with library books or towels for the swimming pool. Pictures from when I am ready to head off to college or drive to a new city for my first real job. Pictures of me with my chubby toddlers who are now graceful young women. Poses with friends who have remained a part of my life and those who have drifted away. Photos of happy times with family members who have died. Pictures from big special events or the most routine tasks of the day. Formal portraits and action snapshots. Sorting through these photos I see myself at various ages, engaged in different vocations and in a variety of places. Transformation certainly is a consistent theme. While I was my authentic self at each of those life stages I am a different person today as I was then.

Today is the Memorial of Saint Mary Magdalene. Transformation is a word which comes to mind when I think about Mary Magdalene. She experienced profound personal transformation as she changed how she lived her life. Her love of Jesus and loyalty to him have always been an inspiration to me. What courage she demonstrated as she was present to Jesus during the horrific days of the crucifixion.

The gospel today invites us to pray about the first day after the crucifixion. The ever loyal Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb of Jesus to pray and when seeing the stone removed from the tomb believes that the body of Jesus has been stolen. Her devastating grief clouded her ability to see Jesus but rather she assumes he was the gardener. When she realizes she is talking with her beloved Jesus he says to her, "Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father." Mary Magdalene must start to make sense of the transformation of Jesus. And he needs her help to tell his disciples "I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Again the abiding faith and loyalty of Mary Magdalene is demonstrated as she shares this important message from Jesus.

When I think about the pictures I have been sorting from my lifespan, I have been reflecting upon times of transformation in my life. While I always strive to be a better person, I know I have had plenty of dark days. Mary Magdalene is such a comfort and an inspiration for me to build upon what I know to be true and also be ready to make a leap of faith.

These questions are part of my reflection and prayer today: When has Jesus been present to me and I have not seen him? In this culture what are the challenges of living my faith with true fidelity? How

can I appreciate God's presence through the transformations in my life? What can I do to accept changes in others? When do I best serve the kingdom of God?

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

Get the picture?

Mary Lee Brock-Creighton University's Werner Institute