

Women Witnesses - Mary Magdalene Series

"The Feast of St. Christiana"

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by Joan Zamola

As we conclude our week of celebrating women in the Christian Church, I would like to share a few more thoughts about Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene is described as a "faithful follower of Jesus." What a great way to be remembered! In reading about her, she seemed to me to be an ordinary person who got up each morning, did the chores set before her and did them, did them because of her love of Jesus. Mary Magdalene was a wonderful Christian witness, not only to her own community, but to us who live centuries later.

Whenever I read about a saint, I try to put myself into his or her place so that I can better understand them. But often I have a very hard time doing this. For instance, I can't even imagine having the patience of St. Theresa who suffered so uncomplainingly from the pain caused by her tuberculosis. I can't imagine being as brave or as courageous as St. Joan of Arc. But, with Mary Magdalene, I felt much more comfortable. In the first place, she is referred to as the person out of whom Christ cast seven demons. Now, seven demons sounded like a lot, until I started to count my own and I got to seven so fast, I quit. I can definitely relate to Mary Magdalene.

And then I started to think about her positive qualities and they far outnumbered her demons. After Christ removed her demons she spent the rest of her life following Him. Talk about loyalty! And she must have been a leader, and a hard-working woman, for she is mentioned first by Matthew, Mark and Luke whenever they describe the women who followed Christ and provided for Him. When Christ died, she was at the foot of the cross with Christ's mother Mary. Where were all the apostles? Is that a loving and caring person, or not?

She was among the first to go to His tomb the day after the crucifixion. Matthew describes her visit like this, "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from Heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it." Can you imagine how frightened Mary must have been, to be a part of that?! How brave and courageous she was! And when she went to the tomb and Jesus was missing, she was overcome with grief. But, can you imagine the joy she must have felt when Christ called her name, and because of her faith, she recognized Him! But, when she tried to do as Christ had instructed her, to go to the disciples and tell them that she had seen Him, they would not believe her. It was only after Christ appeared to them, that they did believe. And Christ upbraided the disciples for not believing Mary. Now, I may be reading into this passage, but I think the advice here is, "Gentlemen, listen to the women!"

Mary Magdalene has shown us how important it is for us to become Christian witnesses to the world and to each other. Right now, in my own life, there are many women who witness to me every day by their courage and their faith. There is my sister-in-law who cares twenty-four hours a day for her husband who has had many strokes, and my friend of over fifty years whose forty-

nine year old daughter has been stricken with cancer. Another long-time friend recently lost her husband to Alzheimer's, and my cousin, who is watching her forty-four year old daughter cope with a debilitating cancer. By witnessing their courage, my faith has been strengthened.

Mary Magdalene also teaches us that, while we do all have our own personal demons, with Christ's help, we can overcome them. Be forgiven as she was and go on to lead a better life. Let us never forget that God has made sure that, each one of us, like Mary Magdalene, also has many good qualities too.