

**Meeting Mary Magdalene or where have all the demons gone.**

We have left behind the liturgical seasons of Lent (Purple), Easter & Solemnities (White) and Pentecost (Red), and we find ourselves back, as the Irish like to say, to the wearing of the green of Ordinary time.

What happens during these most ordinary of times?

One answer to this question is that it is in Ordinary Time that we meet Jesus. He engages us with a simple yet daunting request. It is the same challenge he gave to the original disciples when he says: "Come follow me."

In the past few weeks, we have been following him through the Gospel of Mark. We have seen Jesus preach the parable of the mustard seed. We were almost lost on the Sea of Galilee when a violent storm arose, and our Lord calmed the waters. Jesus has cast out demons from a man so possessed that the town had banished him to a cave.

We entered another village, and we were amazed at the faith of a woman who had been bleeding for years. She simply touched the clothes of our teacher, and she was cured. The same day he raised a girl from the dead. We were astonished by this and wondered, "How can he do these things?"

We were with him in Nazareth where his family, and friends and the entire town rejected him.

Which brings us to today's gospel story. It is after this failure in Nazareth that Jesus chooses to call us into service. We are to go out two by two into the country side. We are to take very little with us, and our Lord tells us we will have the power to chase away the demons.

Casting out demons reminds us of how young Mary Magdalene came to be one of the disciples. As we wandered from place to place we entered the tiny town of Magdala. She was possessed with 7 demons and an outcast and it was obvious she was tormented. Most of the people considered her to be an evil person.

Jesus did not seem to care about what others thought. He reached out and took her by the hand and in a moment, all of these demons were gone and a new state of peace descended on her. She has been with us ever since.

How in the world can Jesus expect us to do these types of things? Perhaps we are feeling much like Amos in the first reading. When Amos was told that he is to "go, prophesy to my people Israel", he reminded the boss that he is but a simple herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees.

Most of us here today identify ourselves as something other than modern-day prophets. We are husbands and wives, children and students, workers and players of games.

Another question for Christ as he sends us out two by two into the world might be; "Jesus- Where have all the demons gone". There just don't seem to be any evil spirits around anymore.

Jesus may well tell us that the demons are out there, they are just more cleverly disguised than they were 2000 years ago.

Here is a quick story to illustrate that this may well be true.

A month ago, I met Mary Magdalene. She is a young native woman who goes by the name of TJ.

We were at a Harvey's having dinner together, and she was telling me her life story. TJ recounted how she had been removed from her birth parents at around age 4 because of mistreatment and abuse. She was adopted by a 'Christian' (she put this in air quotes) family. More dysfunctions followed and by the age of 14, she was living on the streets.

She made her living in one of the few ways available to a young girl with no skills, by selling herself. This led her into a lifestyle that included addictions to multiple drugs.

TJ was living life as if she were possessed by any number of demons. She was angry and violent. She was soon in jail and because of her behavior; she would often be thrown into the 'hole' or solitary confinement. She was ok with this as she actually preferred to be alone.

About a year ago she was on her death bed. Her liver had been severely damaged by the drugs, and it seemed as if the demons would win, and she would die young and in prison.

Somehow she rallied. TJ told me that while on what she thought was her deathbed she started to see herself in a different light. For the first time she came to understand she had the power to make choices. She also knew she was not alone in this world.

Before this most-recent stretch in jail TJ had a brief period of freedom. While she was out she met a few new friends. These were Christian people without the air quotes.

TJ knew people were praying for her and while she could not explain why, she told me that knowing this helped her to change.

TJ had met several women who had offered her the hand of friendship. When she was re-arrested, they did not abandon her but stayed in-touch through letters and visits.

When she got out this last time she found an apartment of her dreams. It is small by many standards but to TJ, it was a miracle. It was the first place she had ever had that she could call her own. Then gifts of furniture and other things needed to turn these four walls into a home started to arrive. Gifts from other prophet's she had never met.

A year after her release her body is healing, and she has a life she never thought was possible.

It was over that hamburger at Harvey's that it hit me- I am eating with Mary Magdalene. It occurred to me that many of her demons had been cast out because a few modern day disciples of Christ had reached out to her with the hand of friendship.

It seems that Jesus is just as interested in us as his disciples as he was in the original 12 apostles.

In response to Christ's call to go out into the world and cast out demons you might declare - "Jesus I am just a - *fill in the blank* - I am no prophet."

You know his response without me telling you. It seems he does not care what you think you are what you believe your limitations or fears to be. Jesus simply wants you to say yes, and he gives you the authority to reach out to Mary Magdalene's you meet, the outcast, and armed only with a hand of friendship he asks you to do your best to drive away the demons who haunt the modern-day soul.

The Lord says; "Go prophesy to my people."