

# THE BULLETIN

“So the faith was planted: so it must be restored.”

*Eight Pond Place, Oyster Bay, NY 11771*

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## “Because she has loved much...”

Adapted from a sermon by The Most Rev. Clarence Kelly  
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On a certain occasion, Our Lord was invited to dinner by Simon, a pharisee, who lived in the town of Naim. Christ was pleased to accept this invitation because He wished to confound the dreadful pride of the pharisees and because He wished to publicly show forth the power of His grace in the magnificent conversion of an abandoned sinner. Before the dinner Our Lord, of course, knew this sinner's many offenses, and He had already spread upon her the divine light of His grace which penetrated her soul. This woman, known by everyone as “The Sinner,” understood the abjectness into which she had plunged, and she was filled with horror. It was this soul for which Our Lord waited at the banquet and which He had secretly wounded with His love. He had chosen to draw her to Himself while in public so that by her public repentance she might repair the scandal she had given and show to future generations a glorious example of the mercy of the Sacred Heart. This woman is the saint whose feast day we celebrate each year on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Mary Magdalene is no longer known as “The Sinner” but as “The Penitent.”

No other saint in the liturgical calendar receives this title of “Penitent.” There are holy women, widows, and queens, but only one penitent. St. Mary Magdalene's conversion from a life of sin began by entering into herself. She began to reflect upon Whom it was that she had offended so grievously and how excessive was His goodness, which she had insulted for so long. She was moved by divine grace and the immense love of the Sacred Heart, which freely granted

her this grace of conversion, and she was moved with repentant, unselfish love in return. Our Lord Himself ascribed her love as the motive of her conversion: “Because she has loved much, many sins are forgiven her.” (Luke 7:47) She returned to Our Lord without deliberation, without the slightest notion of the indignation which would befall her from the pharisees. Without delay she sought the Physician of her soul; if she had delayed, the grace may have been withdrawn or her passions may have enslaved her more strongly than ever.

As the company reclined at the dinner table, Mary Magdalene appeared on the balcony, rather disheveled, distraught, holding a large alabaster jar. “Standing behind at His feet,” as the Gospel tells us, “she began to wash His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment.” (Luke 7:38) The penitent now consecrated to penance whatever had formerly been used as an instrument of sin. Her eyes became a fountain of tears; her beautiful hair served as a towel; the perfumes, formerly incentives to vice, were now used to anoint. She prepared, as it were, an altar at the feet of Our Lord, on which she offered the true sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart. She said nothing; she spoke only with her tears. To the Sacred Heart, however, to Whom all hearts are open, her silence spoke louder than any words. She earnestly begged God's mercy, which, by her silence, she proclaimed herself unworthy to obtain.

All who were at dinner were dumbfounded at