

## Quality of Friendship

In her book, *The Friendship of Women*, Joan Chittister OSB suggests “friendship is the opening up of ourselves to the care, to the wisdom, of the other” (p XIV), and presents eight women as models for the factors of friendship.

As we approach the Feast of St Mary Magdalene (Saturday 22 July) this Mercy Moment will focus on the last (but not the least) of the women in this book – Mary Magdalene.

Sister Joan describes Mary Magdalene’s implicit trust in, and unconditional love for, Jesus as the bedrock of true friendship. She stayed by Jesus’ side and did not desert him when things got tough. This type of friendship knows all, celebrates all and survives all.

As Sister Joan states:

*Friendship is the linking of spirits. It is a spiritual act, not a social one. It is the finding of the remainder of the self. (p 81).*

*Mary Magdalene is the woman whom scripture calls by name in a time when women were seldom named in public documents... She is named fourteen times – more than any other woman in the New Testament except Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus (p 81).*

*She was there at the beginning of his ministry. And she was there at the end. She was there when they were following him in cheering throngs. And she was there when they were taking his life... She tended his grave and shouted his dying glory and clung to his soul. She knew him, and she did not flinch from the knowing. (p 82)*

Sister Joan outlines the Magdalene quality of friendship as:

- **KNOWLEDGE:** the capacity to truly know another person;
- **INTIMACY:** the unshakeable immersion in the life of the other bearing witness to the highs

and lows with appreciation, affection and warmth;

- **RESPECT:** *being deeply valued, reverently respected, lovingly tendered, and warmly received (p82-83).*

Sister Joan refers to the **Sacrament of Friendship** (p XX) – the accrual of the blessings of friendship in our lives (past, present, and still to come) which improve, increase, and enhance us. These friendships are a priceless gift to be cherished and treasured.

As we remember Mary Magdalene and her place in our faith story, let’s give thanks for the gifts of friendship in our own lives.



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Reflection: How can you enhance the friendships in your own life and in your ministry?

*We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.*