



St. Mary Magdalene “Apostle to the Apostles”

Feast Day: July 22

Birth/Death: Unknown; present during Jesus Christ’s ministry

Patron: converts, penitent sinners, persecuted Christians, pharmacists, hairdressers, women

Mary Magdalene is so called because she was from the town of Magdala near Galilee. Mary of Magdala is mentioned 12 times in the Gospels.

In Luke 8:1-2, we learn that Mary Magdalene was with Jesus and the twelve Apostles as they traveled through villages preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. This same Gospel passage tells us that Jesus healed several women from “evil spirits and infirmities” including Mary Magdalene “from whom seven demons had gone out.” The number seven in the Bible is significant and symbolizes completeness. Therefore, one interpretation is that the demons had complete possession of Mary Magdalene. In another interpretation, the seven demons suggest Mary Magdalene was morally depraved, leading some to believe she was the repentant sinner in Lk 7:37. The interpretation of Mary as a grave sinner grew so that some even considered her to be the *unnamed* adulterous woman about to be stoned in Jn 8:1-11. It is now considered unconvincing that Mary is the grave sinner referred to in Lk 7 or the adulteress in John’s Gospel. Jn 11:1-2 also speaks of a reformed sinner who anointed Jesus with oil and names this woman as Mary of Bethany, sister of Martha and Lazarus. In any case, Jesus cured Mary Magdalene because he is mightier than seven demons! The final point in Lk 8:1-2 is that these women helped support Jesus and his Apostles from their “own resources;” which suggests to Biblical scholars that Mary Magdalene was wealthy. Recent archeological findings support the idea that Magdala was a wealthy fishing town.

In Mark 15, we find that Mary Magdalene was present at the Crucifixion of Jesus, even as all but one Apostle fled. She follows Joseph of Arimathea and saw where the body of Jesus was laid. In Mark 16, she is among those who bring spices to anoint the body and discover the stone has been moved. An angel tells her he has risen. In John 20, Mary, Peter and John are at the empty tomb of Jesus. Peter and John leave and Mary weeps outside the tomb. When she peers inside, she sees two angels in white, who ask why she cries. She replies, “[They have taken my Lord and I don’t know where they laid him.](#)” Jesus appears and Mary Magdalene does not recognize him until he calls her name. She is the first to see the Resurrected Christ. He sends her to the disciples with a message. “[I have seen the Lord,](#)” Mary tells the disciples. Because she announced the Resurrection of Jesus to the Apostles, St. Thomas Aquinas called Mary Magdalene the “Apostle to the Apostles.”

In 2016, Pope Francis elevated Mary Magdalene’s July 22nd memorial to the dignity of a feast day, a higher liturgical celebration than a memorial, but not as high as a Solemnity.