

On that first Easter morning, two angels in “dazzling garments” appeared to the women who were looking for Jesus’ body in the tomb and the angels said, “Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised” (Lk 24:1-12). In recent years there have been many books, articles and TV “documentaries” produced by “progressive” theologians and scholars who are in search of the “historical Jesus.” They conclude that we really do not know what Jesus actually did or taught: “your guess is as good as separate the historical Jesus from the so called “Jesus of faith.” This means, according to these scholars, the “Jesus we understand him today – has little or no connection with the walked the earth some 2000 years ago: the “Jesus of faith” is a mythical invention of the early Christians; the actual, historical Jesus, has been lost, submerged in history never to be found. My friends, those who reach such conclusions are terribly blind to the reality of who Jesus is: they are seeking the living One among the dead!



Today we celebrate the fact that there is only one Jesus. The historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith are identical. Jesus rose from the dead – he never got lost!! He promised he would be with his Church until the end of the world, that he would lead us and guide us into all the truth, that he would serve forever as the head of the Church against which the gates of hell would not prevail! The fact is, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever! The Apostles lived with Jesus and after the Resurrection, Jesus lived in the Apostles. He continues to live in all the faithful throughout history: The Jesus known by Peter is identical to the Jesus known by St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Augustine, St. Benedict, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Teresa of Calcutta, and Pope St. John Paul II! Jesus is not lost; he is not dead. The Gospel letters accurately portray what Jesus did and taught.

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*The message of Jesus is not a human invention, it is not man-made, it is God’s eternal living Word revealed by Jesus and entrusted to His Church to endure until the end of time! Jesus promised to be present to all His disciples, in every generation, and to lead them into all truth through His appointed shepherds – the Apostles and their successors – to whom He said, “When they hear you, they hear me. If they reject you, they reject me.”*

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How do I know Jesus is alive today? There are many ways, but I will mention just one. When Peter reached Jesus’ tomb, he saw the burial cloths alone on the ground – he went home amazed! He did not see the risen Christ (not yet!), but he saw what was left behind: the cloths which had held Jesus captive in death had been broken—they lay helpless on the ground. In my lifetime, I have never seen the risen Christ, but I have seen what he has left behind. I have personally seen and known many people who were wrapped in burial cloths – selfishness, pride, greed, lust, sin, etc. – but have found new life in the risen Christ and now the old burial cloths have been broken, they lay helpless on the ground. I do not have to look far to see evidence of what the risen Christ has left behind. At our beloved St. Isidore Parish, I see every day generous and loving people: those who visit the sick, labor for religious education, attend Mass and Confession with devotion, sit on committees, extend their hands in friendship, and give of their time and money in a million different ways to be of service to others. I realize none of us are perfect, but I can look into your faces and know Jesus has never been lost . . . YOU died with Christ and rose with him!! I must say to all my unfortunate friends who have lost sight of the “historical Jesus”: Why do you continue to seek the living one among the dead? He is not there; He has been raised. For those who have ears to hear, His voice is as clear today as it was in His Sermon on the Mount. Alleluia!!

Happy Easter to all!!

Fr. Terry Staples



## 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 22<sup>nd</sup> memorial to the dignity of a feast day, a higher liturgical celebration than a memorial, but not as high as a Solemnity.