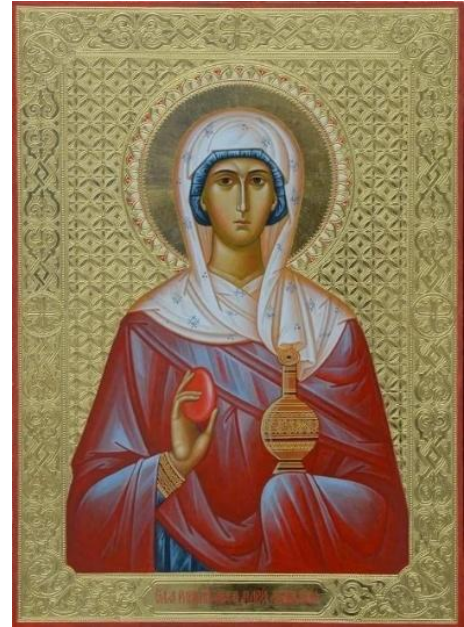


Mary Magdalene, Apostle to the Apostles
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost: July 19, 2026
By: Deacon Ben Remmert

Ruth 1:6-18 Psalm 73:23-28
Acts 13:26-33 John 20:1-2, 11-18

Have you ever met someone whose reputation precedes them? Maybe it's a celebrity or a public figure that you thought you would never meet? Whether the reputation was accurate or not, others set the tone for your interaction with that person. Reputations are interesting. After all, reputations are something that we cannot control; instead, we can only have influence on it. Our reputation lives apart from us and has the potential to live on after us.



The focus of today's message is on Mary Magdalene, whose reputation is well known, but has often been marginalized and largely overlooked. While the church officially celebrates her feast day this Wednesday, we are challenged today to reclaim her legacy. Peeling back the traditions accredited to her, like the dying of red eggs during the Easter season; she is a disciple, an apostle, preacher, an eyewitness of the Passion, conversant with the angels, benefactrix, burial attendant, healed, and a messenger of the gospel. In celebrating her feast day, it is important for us to remember that we don't pray or worship her, rather we find ways to learn from her.

Today we read John's account of the resurrection and how Mary Magdalene was the first witness to the resurrection. We know Mary was one of the female followers who became central when everything began to fall apart after Jesus' death. While the twelve disciples abandoned and fled, Mary was faithful. Yet, we don't often remember her for this faithfulness. We can easily think of the disciple who betrayed Jesus (Judas), or the disciple known for denying Jesus three times (Peter); yet, Mary isn't often remembered as the one who faithfully watched Jesus' crucifixion or how she is the one who was tending to the Jewish burial customs or for her bold witness to her faith.

Why are we so confused about the real Mary Magdalene? It's hard to know exactly as there are many different views on why Mary is not recognized as highly as she deserves. Scripture scholar Mary Thompson notes in her work, *Mary of Magdala: Apostle and Leader*, comments that "It's remarkable that all four gospels have the same story [of the resurrection]. You can be sure that if it had been possible to eliminate those women who went out from the empty tomb, [the gospel writers] would have done it' because of the prevailing attitude toward women in those times."

Destroying or diminishing someone's reputation is not confined to only Jesus' time, though. We see people in this time working to ruin other's reputations or diminish them in a variety of ways all the time. Yet, today's gospel is a reminder that those on the margins cannot be silenced for they witness to the power of God's presence. In today's gospel reading we find Mary Magdalene early in the morning finding the empty tomb. She had an encounter with the risen Christ and experienced Jesus calling her by name. Mary was sent and she became the apostles to the apostles– the first advocate and supporter of the resurrection.

Our tradition has some gems of strong, faithful women leading the church. In today's first reading we heard of Ruth and Naomi who show deep love, commitment, and devotion. We hear of Mary Magdalene in today's gospel, and we're reminded in our reading from Acts that many are sent to be witnesses to God's life, death, and resurrection; a calling that we are all called to do.

Being sent to share the good news is a hard thing, however. Mary was met with resistance and probably some doubt. So too we may have had experiences of being unsure of what to say about our faith. Maybe it feels too much like overbearing conversion or recruitment. Maybe it's because we tend to witness our faith through our actions and don't feel the need to verbally share that our faith calls us to action. Maybe it's because we don't feel like we have the tools or language to share our faith stories with one another. I can't imagine that Mary Magdalene thought she had the tools when she showed up in tears at the tomb. I can't imagine she thought anyone would take her seriously; after all she's a woman in those days. However, she has something to teach us as the first witness to the resurrection and was brave enough to share her witness to the disciples, thus beginning the church all those years ago.

As Mary was so brave to share her faith, I wonder if being more forward with our faith in caring ways would look like. I wonder what our world would look like if we embraced our beliefs that all people are filled with God's spirit, that love conquers fear and hate, and that a little bit of mystery in our life is a good thing. Perhaps we'd have less hatred if we saw people of other faiths, cultures, races, orientations, and careers as children of God and not as others. Perhaps with this world view, we can witness how God works to break down barriers and bringing us together.

So dear friends, I would challenge you to not minimize yourself in sharing about your faith. Explore why your faith matters. Take hold of the situation to share your faith when it presents itself and, like Mary Magdalene, be bold. Be strong. You are loved and sent to share the life giving, good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.