

A prayer service for the feast of St. Mary of Magdala: Apostle to the Apostles

This can be used as a prayer or vespers service on or around July 22 or parts of it can be incorporated into the Saturday or Sunday Eucharistic liturgy in a homily, prayers of the faithful, and/or communion reflection time. It would be particularly appropriate for a woman to preach during this celebration.

Gathering Song: “Hymn to Love” (as below... to the melody of “God of Day, God of Darkness” or The Sacred Harp, 844) or “Gather us In” (by Marty Haugen ©1986, GIA Publication, Inc.) or choice of community.

- 1) *If I speak with human wisdom or angelic sophistry, it is nothing but distraction if I have no love in me. Empty words devoid of meaning, all a hollow echo of clanging cymbal in the silence: I am nothing without love.*
- 2) *If I have prophetic powers, understand all mysteries, have the faith and all the knowledge to move mountains, still the seas; give away all my possessions, all on earth I'm fondest of, give myself and all my freedom: it is nothing without love.*
- 3) *Love is all that really matters. Love is patient, love is kind. Love is pathway to compassion and how justice is defined. Never boastful nor resentful, love is never jealous of the achievements of another. Love is God, and God is love.*
- 4) *As a child we thought like children. We've outgrown our childhood phase. As adults now it is time- we put an end to childish ways. Our reflection in a mirror shows us dimly but - a trace of the one we'll know completely when we meet Love face to face.*
- 5) *Words will vanish, knowledge cease, for there is nothing that extends. Only love is ever lasting, only true love never ends. Love believes all and receives all, never growing weary of keeping faith, sustaining hope: these will abide because of love.*

(Words © M.T. Winter, 1999. Music: The Sacred Harp 1844, recorded on the CD *Hymns Re-Imagining* and *Songlines*. Available from Medical Mission Sisters, mms@hartsem.edu, 860-233-0875. Permission granted for one-time use.)

Greetings

PRESIDER: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. *or*
In the name of God, Source of All Being, Eternal Word, and Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen.

PRESIDER: May the grace and peace of Jesus, our risen Christ, be with all of you.

ALL: And also with you.

PRESIDER: Let us greet one another in the peace of the Risen Christ. (Exchange a sign of peace).

PRESIDER: Let us pray. God, source of all wisdom and compassion, just as you called Mary of Magdala, you have also called each of us from our baptism to be disciples in your Reign. Gift us with the courage to hear your call and the strength to follow your way. Teach us, each in our own way, to be disciples of the Gospel of Christ. In the name of Jesus.

ALL: Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: Sing a familiar ALLELUIA.

GOSPEL: John 20:1-18; (Or Luke 24:1-12, or any of the resurrection accounts)

Reflection on the Gospel: (It would be most appropriate for a woman to preach during this celebration).

Antiphon/Prayers of the Faithful

- Group 1 Jesus healed Mary of Magdala of a very serious illness and then she followed him, supporting his mission with all of her resources.
- Group 2 Thank you O Christ, for all the ways you heal us. Open our hearts to receive your healing grace and let us, like Mary of Magdala, put all we have at your service.
- Group 1 Mary of Magdala traveled with Jesus and the other disciples in a small community, learning about God's new reign of justice and of love.
- Group 2 God of Wisdom, lead us to that community of faith where we too can learn and grow.
- Group 1 Mary and the other women and men disciples persevered with Jesus, even when he was persecuted by his own religious leadership and government authorities.
- Group 2. God of Strength, help us stand in Jesus' truth and healing love especially when we experience persecution for justice' sake .
- Group 1 Mary of Magdala remained at Jesus' side through fearsome suffering, a brutal death and anonymous burial.
- Group 2 O God, who accompanies us when we suffer, give us strength to accompany our loved ones who are sick and dying. Keep us mindful of those completely abandoned even by their families and friends.
- Group 1 Mary of Magdala, Joanna and the other women were called by God to be the first witnesses to the Resurrection.
- Group 2 Wisdom Spirit, help us recognize and accept our call to witness to Your power to bring life from death.
- Group 1 When Jesus called Mary by name, she recognized him.
- Group 2 Saving One, give us ears to hear and eyes to see our true name calling deep within.
- Group 1 Jesus sent Mary, Salome and the other women disciples to proclaim the Good News to the Apostles even though they would not believe them.
- Group 2 Rabboni, teach us how to proclaim the miracle of your Risen Love in a disbelieving world.
- Group 1 Because of her witness and fidelity, Mary of Magdala is known as the Apostle to the Apostles.
- Group 2 Help us, O God of Righteousness, to accept your apostolic call "to go and tell our brothers and sisters" of Jesus' power to heal... even wounded structures which exclude.
- Group 1 Women were faithful disciples of Jesus and significant leaders in the early Christian communities.
- Group 2 Help us Most Inclusive One, to reclaim our baptismal call to leadership.

- Group 1 Today women are called to discipleship and leadership in our Church and faith communities.
Group 2 Healing Spirit, help our Church welcome the women leaders you send to us today.

Rite of Sending

(play quiet, instrumental music— possibly begin melody from closing song.)

PRESIDER: Let us pray. (stand) God of love and compassion, just as you called Mary of Magdala, you also call us by our baptism to go forth and tell the Good News. We answer you as people who are often unsure of our desire to be so embraced. Guide us closer to You and to each other. Strengthen us in our baptismal vocations. Build us into the Reign of God, and seal us with the Spirit of your Promise. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Teacher and our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

(All are invited to come forward for laying on of hands and blessing with water from the Baptismal Font. As each comes forward to receive the laying on of hands, please turn, dip your hands into the water and lay hands on the head of the person behind you. You may then return to your seat until all who wish have come forward. If the crowd is too large, presider may lay hands on the heads of those in the first pews. They then turn around and lay hands on the heads of those behind them until the action has spread through the assembly).

PRESIDER (and then each person in turn to the next): (Name), You are called by God. Go forth and proclaim, “I have seen the Lord.”

Blessing and Dismissal (stand)

PRESIDER: Dear friends, we are about to go forth into the world renewed to be disciples of the Reign of God. God will seek to re-create us. Christ will continue to be our Way, our Truth, and our Life. The Spirit will be our guide and inspiration. May Mary of Magdala be our model of courage and faithful service to the Gospel. By her example may we delight in the presence of Jesus and shout with joy: “I have seen the Lord!”

May God bless us all: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. *or*
May God bless us all: Source of all Being, Eternal Word, and Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen.

PRESIDER: Let us go forth from here in peace to be signs of hope and preachers of the Good News.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

Closing Song:

“Come Sophia” (as below... to the melody from “Sing a New Church”) or
“Bring Forth the Kingdom” (by Marty Haugen ©1982, GIA Publications, Inc) or
other familiar hymn.

1) Come Sophia Holy Wisdom, gateway to eternity. Sacred source of all that is from long before earth came to be. In Your womb the primal waters from below and from above gently rock your sons and daughters born to wisdom and to love.

2) Come Sophia , be a clear compelling presence everywhere. Still the terror; dry the tears; come, ease the burdens that we bear. From the first faint light of morning through the dark when day is done, be the midwife of our birthing and the rising of our sun.

3) Come Sophia, intuition weaving wisdom deep within, bringing promise to fruition through the prophets that have been, pleading justice for tomorrow and forgiveness for today for the images we borrow and the roles we often play.

4) Come Sophia, we believe You are the shaman of the soul. Break us open to receive You, fill us up and make us whole. You inspire us to envision all the fullness of shalom on a new path through tradition that will surely lead us home.

(Words: MT Winter C 1999 Music Nettleton from Wyeth’s Repository of Sacred Music 1813. From *Hymns Re-Imagining* and *Songlines*. Available from Medical Mission Sisters mms@hartsem.edu 860-233-0875
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Prayer service developed by Patricia Dailey, a Pastoral Minister in Fresno, CA; Laurel Jurecki, a Pastoral Minister in Cleveland, OH; and Christine Schenk a Sister of St. Joseph and Director of FutureChurch. (Opening and closing hymns may be interchanged depending on the wisdom of the prayer service planners)

For further information contact FutureChurch at 15800 Montrose Ave. Cleveland Ohio 44111 , phone: 216-228-0869, email: info@futurechurch.org

Mary of Magdala celebrations are an outgrowth of the Women in Church Leadership Project developed by FutureChurch in partnership with Call to Action