

# ***Celebration of the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala***

*Ideally this celebration is preceded by a presentation about Mary of Magdala given by a biblical scholar or Church historian. Feel free to adapt this prayer service according to the time you have available.*

*Before the program begins you will need to copy the individual Mary of Magdala prayer papers (enclosed) on various colors of paper. Cut apart each prayer into a strip, fold over at least once, and place in a small basket at each of the laying on of hands sites. People are invited to take prayer paper from the basket to take home.*

*You will also need to include a copy of the choral reading (enclosed here) and the reflection/ action sheet (described below) with each program.*

**Opening Song:** *Gather Us In* (Stand) Song by Marty Haugen C 1982, G.I.A.. Publications. Found in *Today's Missal Music* 2002, Oregon Catholic Press.

OR

*Song of the Body of Christ:* David Haas (1957 c. 1989 GIA as found in *Gather*)

**Opening Prayer** (PRESIDER:): “God, we come to celebrate this midsummer day (eve) the story of Jesus’ resurrection, first proclaimed by St. Mary of Magdala. We thank you for the healing gift of Jesus’ resurrecting love... proclaimed by first century women and men even to this present day. We thank you for Mary of Magdala’s gift to Jesus of accompaniment in suffering, death and resurrection. Open our hearts to hear what special part of Jesus’ “good news,” belongs to each of us present here tonight.”

ALL: Amen

**Reading 1** Matt 28-1-10 (*Reader ends with*): “The Word of the Lord”

ALL: “Thanks be to God”

## **Time of Quiet**

**Reading II** Choral Reading (*Adapted from **Soul Sisters: Women in Scripture Speak to Women Today** by Edwina Gateley (Orbis 2002). Two small groups may alternate this reading, or the gathered community could be divided into two and do the reading antiphonally.*)

## **Time of Quiet**

**Reflection** *If you have a formal presentation before the prayer service in the interests of time, people may be invited to reflect quietly and complete this exercise at home...otherwise:*

HOMILIST *develops some of themes listed on reflection/action paper or if desired, the PRESIDER: suggests a “shared homily” by inviting each person to reflect on a gift that they would like to receive from Jesus and a gift they would like to give to Jesus that was inspired by the Matthew’s gospel or the choral reading. Use the reflection/action sheet to start the process.*

*Encourage people to share or be silent as they are comfortable.*

*After the sharing is finished, invite people (according to the call of the Spirit), to consider that the “gift” they give to Jesus could include involvement in one of the ministries listed on the paper.*

## Prayers of the Faithful:

PRESIDER: "Let us take time now to present our special needs and requests to God. Our response is: *Risen One, Hear our Prayer.*"

**Ritual of laying on of hands** (*reflective music plays in the background, perhaps "Be Not Afraid"* (Bob Dufford, SJ c 1975 Published by OCP Publications in Today's Missal Music 2002 # 445) OR "*Canticle of Mary Holy is Your Name*" Text: Luke 1:46-55, David Haas. Music: WILD MOUNTAIN THYME, Irish traditional; arr. by David Haas C 1989, G.I.A. Publications)

PRESIDER: *invites each person to come forward. As they receive the laying on of hands each is told "\_\_\_\_\_ (name) Do Not Be Afraid: You are called by God to live and proclaim the good news of the Gospel." After receiving the laying on of hands, each person chooses one of the Mary of Magdala prayer papers from the basket to take home, and returns to their seat.* *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. The prayer papers could then be passed among the assembly.*

## Closing Prayer:

PRESIDER: "Dear friends. We are about to walk further on the road that leads to the glory of the resurrection. 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. Like her, may we heed Jesus' message: "Do Not Be Afraid: Go and tell my brethren the Good News that the reign of God is at hand."

And may God bless us all: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (*option: Source of all Being, Eternal Word, Holy Spirit*).

ALL: Amen.

PRESIDER: Now, 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** "*God Has Chosen Me*" by Bernadette Farrell c 1990 (Portland: OCF Publications, 1991) found in Today's Missal Music (2002) # 372.

OR

*Canticle of the Turning*" by Rory Cooney, (c 1952 c 1990 GIA Publications, Inc. in Gather)

*Prayer service developed by Christine Schenk csj*

*For further information visit [www.futurechurch.org](http://www.futurechurch.org) or contact FutureChurch 15800 Montrose Ave. Cleveland Ohio 44111 216-228-0869 [magdala@futurechurch.org](mailto:magdala@futurechurch.org)*

St. Mary of Magdala celebrations are an outgrowth of the **Women in Church Leadership Project** developed by **FutureChurch** ([www.futurechurch.org](http://www.futurechurch.org)) in partnership with **Call to Action** ([www.cta-usa.org](http://www.cta-usa.org))

## Reflection and Action Sheet

### Gifts given by Jesus to Mary of Magdala

1. Helped her to see her "Soul beauty."
2. Gift of friendship, near companioning.

3. Casting out demons of fear, doubt, self hatred and repression.
4. Raising to fullness of life (healing).
5. Calling forth Mary's powerful individual giftedness ("presence").
6. New awareness of the Realm of God ... Ability to see Jesus anew as the powerful and loving Risen One... ,
7. Strength and courage to proclaim resurrection and work for the new realm of God

### **Gifts given by Mary of Magdala to Jesus:**

1. Steadfast supportive presence in Galilee...,
2. Food..nourishment for the body..love, support for the spirit to Jesus and his entourage of male and female disciples.
3. Partnership/solidarity in resistance to oppression, both political and religious
4. Waiting presence while Jesus was imprisoned and tortured
5. Faithful companionship in time of suffering... even at risk of personal persecution.
6. Remained at Jesus' side through a brutal death and anonymous burial.
7. Faith, joy and courage in proclaiming the Realm of God newly aborning through the Spirit of the Risen Christ.

### **Some Needs named in Edwina Gateley's portrayal of Mary of Magdala's life in *Soul Sisters*:**

People ill with "dread diseases" cancer, alzheimer's disease, mental illness, lupus etc.

People with "soul sicknesses" such as being silenced, invisible or voiceless because of sexism, racism, homophobia.

Victims of domestic violence, rape, incest and other forms of sexual abuse

Women and men without access to health care.

Addictions of every kind...particularly crack cocaine

Women silenced, battered, imprisoned who weep alone by the grave

***Prepare a list of local groups that are addressing some of the healing needs evoked by St. Mary of Magdala's life (see below). Make sure to provide contact information since this can be one good way for us to give our gifts to Jesus in this present time. Some particularly appropriate examples are:***

Women's shelters,

Rape crisis centers,

Hospices for the dying,

Free health clinics for the uninsured.

The National Association for the Mentally Ill (NAMI),

Your local American Cancer Society. Alzheimer's group etc.,

Local 12 step programs,

Resources for prison ministry and Anti death penalty groups

Your local peace and justice group such as Pax Christi, Network

Agencies serving the poor,

Church reform groups such as FutureChurch, Call To Action, CORPUS, Women's Ordination Conference,

Dignity, New Ways Ministry, Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church Voice of the Faithful, etc.

Women's faith sharing groups and small faith sharing groups.

JustFaith groups.

Catholic Worker Outreach

The list goes on...think of your own...

**Individual Mary of Magdala Prayer Papers**  
*(reprint on colored paper, cut into small strips, fold at least once)*

Jesus healed Mary of Magdala of a very serious illness and then she followed him, supporting his mission with all of her resources. Thank you O Christ, for all the ways you heal me. Open my heart to receive your healing grace and let me, like Mary of Magdala, put all I have at your service.

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. God of Wisdom, lead me to that community of faith where I too can learn and serve and grow.

Mary and the other women and men disciples persevered with Jesus, even when he was persecuted by his own religious leadership and government authorities. God of Strength, help me stand in Jesus' truth and healing love especially when I experience persecution for justice' sake .

Mary of Magdala remained at Jesus' side through fearsome suffering, a brutal death and anonymous burial. O God, who accompanies me when I suffer, give me strength to accompany my loved ones who are sick and dying. Keep me especially mindful of those completely abandoned even by their families and friends.

Mary of Magdala, Joanna and the other women were called by God to be the first witnesses to the Resurrection. Wisdom Spirit, help me recognize and accept my call to witness to Your power to bring life from death.

When Jesus called Mary by name, she recognized him. Saving One, give me ears to hear and eyes to see my true name calling deep within.

Jesus sent Mary, Salome and the other women disciples to proclaim the Good News to the Apostles even though they would not believe them. Rabboni, teach me how to proclaim the miracle of your Risen Love in a disbelieving world.

Because of her witness and fidelity, Mary of Magdala is known as the Apostle to the Apostles. Help me, 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.

Women were faithful disciples of Jesus and significant leaders in the early Christian communities. Help me Most Inclusive One, to reclaim my baptismal call to leadership.

*(Prayers written by Christine Schenk csj)*

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Adapted from

*Soul Sisters: Women in Scripture Speak to Women Today* by Edwina Gately

[Meanwhile, Mary (Magdalene) stood weeping beside the tomb. Even as she wept, she stopped to peer inside, and there she saw two angels, in dazzling robes... “Woman,” they asked her, “why are you weeping?” She answered them, “Because the Lord has been taken away...” She turned around and caught sight of Jesus standing there. But she did not know him... Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned to him and said “Rabbouni!” (meaning “Teacher.”)]

John 20:11-16]

I & II

Ah, Mary of Magdala,  
they did not tell us  
your story.

ALL

They did not tell us, Mary.  
They did not tell us your story.

I

It was lost,  
buried deep  
in layers  
of fear and denial,  
that such a one as you –

Female,  
fiercely loyal friend of Jesus –

could walk so closely  
with the Son of God,  
never leaving his side

even as you stood  
before the gates of hell.  
What sickness wracked  
your woman body, Mary,  
before the one you came to love  
raised you into fullness,  
dispelling all

that beat you down?  
Did you creep around

the dusty streets of Galilee  
wracked by cancerous cells?  
Or did some unknown virus

sap your spirit –

leaving you  
wringing out and desolate.

What dread sickness was it, Mary  
that gripped you  
with all of seven symptoms?

ALL

They did not tell us, Mary.  
They did not tell us your story.

II

But we know  
your spirit was battered  
in a society  
which had no place for you.

Was your sickness then  
a soul sickness?  
Were the demons

that devoured you,  
offsprings of despair  
in a patriarchal culture  
where your voice  
could never be spoken,  
your words

never heard?

Could it be, sister  
that, beaten down,  
into silence and submission,  
your would-be powerful spirit  
shriveled into sickness,  
bitter in your belly?

Did you fear  
the very intelligence

that warned you to be mute  
lest your woman voice –  
disallowed in public –  
break out in mighty scream  
provoking rage and retaliation  
from the ones

who made the rules?  
Or could it be  
that your very talents –  
marking you a misfit –  
drove you to self-doubt and shame,  
rejection of your very self?

ALL

They did not tell us, Mary.  
They did not tell us your story.

I

Could your seven demons  
be those very ones  
that reside still in your sisters,  
two thousand years later,  
covering in shadowy apartments,  
brutalized by

domestic violence  
and believing it deserved?  
Afraid to speak,

to break the chains  
that bind them.

Were you, Mary,  
as spirit-dead as they?  
Did fear and silence

drive you  
to the sickness  
of the dying?  
And are you still alive

with us,  
Mary of Magdala,  
in those women in North Africa who,

forced to spend their lives  
in the confines of their huts,  
are driven  
to induce abortions  
to gain hospital entrance?

There they will meet,  
in pain-filled conspiracy,  
their sisters  
and hold hands and conversation  
to hold back,

for a while,  
incipient madness  
ever looming before them

through the silence and solitude  
of their untold story.

Or are you  
our sisters in prison, Mary?

Locked up  
because they could not say no  
to the crack cocaine  
that dulled the violence

of their lives,  
misting over memories  
of multiple rapes?  
Ah, Mary of Magdala,

were you also imprisoned

by your story

never told?

ALL

They did not tell us, Mary.  
They did not tell us your story.

II

Until one day,  
Ah, one glorious, glorious day,  
destined to shine  
through history,  
beckoning

like a flaming beacon  
to women throughout the ages,  
He looked upon you, Mary  
and saw

your soul beauty  
starved for light  
and voice.

The man, Jesus,  
capable like a lightning rod

of burning through darkness,  
recognized you,  
Mary of Magdala,  
as his own –  
friend, companion, apostle.

It was in that moment  
of recognition,  
of claiming and honoring  
all you were  
that Jesus dispelled in you  
the demons of fear, doubt  
and repression, raising you up

into fullness, calling forth  
your powerful presence –  
long fetal-curling in the womb.

Ah, Mary of Magdala,  
you knew first

your own rising from the dead!  
How radiant you shone!  
Your joy leaping up unfettered  
as your dreams spilled out  
in the free hot breeze  
of a village in Galilee!

How was it with you, then,  
as freedom led you dancing  
in the market place?

ALL

They did not tell us, Mary.

They did not tell us your story.

I

By his side now  
strong you stood,  
supportive and affirming  
of the One

who broke your chains.  
You never left him, Mary,  
faithful friend,  
even as the authorities closed in –

horrified at freedom,  
trembling with anger  
before equality's brave stance.  
But never again, Mary,

in spite of the threats,  
would you be less  
than you knew yourself to be.  
Were you afraid, Mary,  
as you aligned yourself

with Jesus –  
the one who set you free?

Did your woman heart beat faster  
as the crowds grew bigger  
and his words spread  
through the land?  
Did you nurture

a fragile hope  
that the crowds  
would be raised up too  
and throw off  
their demons of oppression?

You knew, Mary,  
what that would mean,  
you knew that life  
would never, ever,  
be the same again.

You knew, Mary,  
that it was dangerous.  
Resistance always is.  
But you stayed with him.

ALL

They did not tell us, Mary.  
They did not tell us your story.

I

You listened more deeply  
to the words he spoke

and they took root  
in you –  
strengthening, affirming, guiding.  
And so you stood firm  
against the whisperings,  
the threats, the rumors.  
You held his hand –  
as women do the ones they love.  
You prepared food for him –  
as women do for hungry ones.  
You supported him –  
as women do for those in need.  
But above all,  
you loved the man, Jesus,  
and he you,  
Mary of Magdala.  
So when they came for him,  
you went too,  
waiting and fretting  
outside the prison walls  
as women do  
when their menfolk are inside.  
No one can measure  
the anguish that washed  
through you –  
for no one told your story.

ALL

They did not tell us, Mary.  
They did not tell us your story.

I

But others have lived it, Mary,  
the mothers and wives,  
the daughters and sisters  
of El Salvador and Colombia,  
Russia and Iraq,  
Sudan and Bosnia,  
Guatemala and South Africa,  
and many, many more.  
Women who waited,  
and still wait, for news of their men  
taken in the night  
by soldiers, bombs, bullets  
and the Authorities –  
so afraid of freedom.  
Your sisters, Mary,  
keep their vigil yet,  
as you kept yours.  
... Until the verdict was announced,

and you knew,  
with a sickening fall of heart,  
that it was all over.  
The one who raised you up,  
the one you came to love,  
was also to be raised,  
agonizingly,  
in front of you  
and before all the crowd  
who heard his words  
but never understood them  
as you did.

You could have fled the agony  
of watching  
the killing.

The world would have understood –  
even encouraged you  
to spare yourself the suffering...

But you followed him  
Mary of Magdala,  
right to the end

and the place of execution.  
Love does that sort of thing.  
You led the women

even as your spirit was hurled  
into the depths of hell  
and the men fled the pain  
in fear of apprehension.

You were there, Mary,  
walking all he way  
and watching him 00  
all bloodied –

stumble and fall three times.  
How could you endure, Mary?  
But you did.

ALL

They did not tell us, Mary.  
They did not tell us your story.

II

You watched them fell and nail  
the man who raised you up.  
Slowly his life ebbed away  
before your eyes.  
Ah, Mary,  
something in you,  
must have died that day!  
Then followed the waiting,  
the long grievous waiting

for the funeral rites –  
the washing and anointing of the body.  
In the early light  
of Sabbath  
you gathered with the women  
and hurried to the place  
where they had laid him,  
clutching your ointments  
and your perfumed oils  
to lavish on the one  
you loved.

Claiming,  
as women throughout history  
have claimed,  
the last service of love –  
to stroke and kiss  
their dead.

But your dead was gone –  
black space staring  
where they had left him.  
Deepening your own black space –  
leaving you naked in grief...

Not even the comfort of a body  
for you to bathe with whisperings.  
Ah, Mary!

You knew well  
the desperation  
of those mothers and wives,  
sisters and daughters  
who watch the hearse  
pull out from dark prison walls  
carrying the remains  
of their executed loved ones  
off into a grey dawn.

Where have they taken him?  
Your story of the  
empty grave  
was dismissed as rambling –  
distraught woman-nonsense.  
But you returned to the empty space  
and stayed there –  
unable to leave the ground  
made precious  
by the brush of his skin.

ALL

They did not tell us, Mary.  
They did not tell us your story.

I

It was there,  
in that deep and empty space,  
that he whispered  
your name, Mary,  
leaping you into another world –  
hurting you  
from reality  
into the Realm of God –  
spinning in a miracle,  
I  
love saturated,  
as Jesus, Son of God,  
all risen up,  
breathed your name –  
claiming you  
as treasured and chosen.  
II  
How was it with you then,  
Mary of Magdala?  
Standing in the place of revelation,  
singular woman witness  
of the Resurrection?  
I  
How was it,  
to be so bereft  
and then be thrust, still weeping,  
into the bliss  
of the Realm of God?  
II  
To run, then,  
with that vision –  
that news of life –  
to those who lived in fear?  
I.  
Ah, Mary,  
we your sisters,  
we your brothers,  
need to hear your running  
and your story  
resurrected and dusted from the tomb  
of scriptural exegesis  
into the bright sunlight.  
We need to claim

your vision  
breaking through  
dead history  
into our warm lives.

II.  
We, the women in prison,  
women waiting,  
women silenced,  
women battered,  
women who weep alone by the grave  
need to find you,  
Mary of Magdala.

I.  
In the torn threads  
of our own journeys,  
we need to weave you, Mary,  
sister and friend,  
into our lives  
that we might  
stir and rise,  
fluttering in the hope  
of new beginnings,  
no matter how long dead  
we have lain in the ground.

II.  
Ah, then, Mary,  
brave woman of Magdala  
we too will run  
from our tombs  
singing our song  
of resurrection  
with you, soul sister,  
into the bright,  
bright sun.

I & II.  
Now we tell it, Mary.  
Now we tell your story.

ALL  
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