



Dear Friend,

Thank you for your interest in celebrating the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene with us. Celebrating and lifting up Mary's true role as *Apostle of the Apostles* is an amazing gift we can provide for our Church and world.

This year, our theme is **"Women Speaking Truth to Power."** We have developed a liturgy of the word that features the words of women speaking or writing about pressing issues facing our Church and world today including women's inclusion in the Church, the rights and dignity of trans women, racial justice, and humane immigration policies. We invite you to adapt or expand the liturgy of the word as appropriate for your community. This may mean including readings about environmental justice, indigenous justice, disability justice, women priests, women deacons, domestic violence, etc. The important thing is to uplift the voices of women who are speaking truth to power. You may wish to consult books in your library, website like www.catholicwomenpreach.org, or columns in *National Catholic Reporter* or *Global Sisters Report*.

We recognize that this year's theme may not resonate with you or your community. If that is the case, we encourage you to explore our past prayer services which you can download at <https://futurechurch.org/mary-of-magdala-resource-index/>.

Thank you again for doing your part to help reclaim Mary Magdalene for our Church and world today. If we can be of any assistance to you as you plan your celebration, please reach out to russ@futurechurch.org.

We also invite you to join us as we celebrate virtually. Visit <https://futurechurch.org/events> to learn about and register for our Mary Magdalene presentation by Dr. Mary Coloe on July 17 and our Virtual Celebration with guest preacher, Sr. Eilis McCulloh, HM, on July 22nd

Sincerely,

Russ Petrus, Olivia Hastie, and Martha Ligas
The Team at FutureChurch

FEAST OF ST. MARY MAGDALENE CELEBRATION

Women Speaking Truth to Power

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Gathering Song:

Songs that emphasize themes of church, inclusion/welcome, and women are appropriate:

All Are Welcome by Marty Haugen; *Gather Us In* by Marty Haugen; *Gather Your People* by Bob Hurd ;
Sing a New Church by Delores Dufner and Jeffrey Honoré; *We are Many Parts* by Marty Haugen;
Women of the Church by Carey Landry; *You Shall Be My Witnesses* by Miriam Therese Winter

Sign of the Cross & Exchange of Peace:

Leader: We gather in the name and in the power of
(making the Sign of the Cross)
God, our loving Creator,
Christ Jesus, our Savior,
And the Holy Spirit, our gift and guide,
All: **AMEN.**

Leader: The grace of Jesus, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is with all of you.
All: **And also with you.**

Leader: Please take a moment to welcome one another here.
And share with each other some sign of peace.

Opening Prayer:

Leader: We give you thanks, O God,
that in every generation You have emboldened prophets and truth tellers
who call our church and world to conversion and reconciliation.
As when Mary Magdalene first proclaimed the Resurrection,
you have given their words power:
power to move us from despair to hope,
from grief to healing,
from fear to courage,
from death to new life.
And so we pause once more, this day,
to attune ourselves to these prophets and truth tellers –
these women who speak truth to power.
May their stories instruct and inspire us,
their cries for justice and inclusion call us to conversion,
and their dreams and visions give us hope for a world made new.

ALL: **Attune us to these voices that challenge and inspire;
Help us recognize the possibilities and obstacles in our midst;
Stir our hearts to love a new world into being.
We ask this in Jesus' name. AMEN.**

LITURGY OF THE WORD: WOMEN SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

We have developed the liturgy of the word below to feature the words women have written or spoken on pressing issues facing our world and our Church. We welcome you to use the readings below, to include different or additional readings, include additional issues, or to invite women from your community to speak on contemporary issues they have expertise or experience in.

Leader: In his 2020 book *Let Us Dream*, the late Pope Francis wrote:
“[Jesus] first announced the New Life to women because they were present, attentive, open to new possibilities. Could it be that in this crisis, the perspective women bring is what the world needs at this time to face the coming challenges? Could the Spirit be prompting us to recognize, value and integrate the fresh thinking that some women are bringing to this moment?”

With those words in mind, we turn now to the voices of women
– women who, like those at the tomb, are present, attentive, and open to what’s possible. Women who speak truth, challenge injustice, and offer wisdom for our times.

Let us listen with open hearts:

Sung Response: ***Your Words Are Spirit and Life (refrain)*** by Bernadette Farrell
Either a moment for silent reflection or a brief sung response to each of the following readings is appropriate and may be introduced before the readings begin. We suggest a song that focuses on the word of God.

Reader 1: A reading from Nontando Hadebe’s preaching for the 2020 Feast of St. Mary Magdalene:

Today as we celebrate the apostolic tradition of Mary Magdalene, we rise up as women. And we say we have a tradition that can be traced to Jesus, that can be traced to a direct commandment from Jesus to speak. And we shall speak! We shall speak with authority, we shall speak with intelligence, and we shall speak for ourselves. And we will create a parallel tradition that empowers women.

We live in a world where women are violated. Why? Because they are violatable. We live in a world where women are abused. Why? Because they’ve been abusable. We live in a world where women are excluded. Why? Because they are excludable. We are saying through the apostolic tradition of Mary Magdalene that this stops. We are going to rise up as empowered women knowing that Christ stands with us to speak. ***Sung Response***

From: <https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/07222020>

Reader 2: A reading from Christine Zuba on what the Church needs to know about her life as a Catholic transgender woman:

I often wonder what is it about me that my church fears and singles out? Why am I and the transgender community selectively targeted as “seeking to destroy the family and the world” as some define it? Nothing could be farther from the truth. I understand our faith says that “God made them male and female.” But God made a whole lot more, and everything in between. Our world, science, technology, even our church, has changed over time. Today’s science asserts that something can happen in the womb, between the body and mind, causing a misalignment between the two. I don’t often quote science though. I just know that “I am,” that God made me this way, and that God made me this way for a reason.

I don’t wake up in the morning thinking about being transgender. Our lives are no different than anyone else’s. We live, we work, we pray. We have families. We ask simply to be accepted and a part of our church. We are not an ideology. We are not a threat. All of us are a part of God’s great universe, made in the image and likeness of God, a God who is neither male nor female. *Sung Response*

From: <https://outreach.faith/2022/06/i-am-a-transgender-catholic-woman/>

Reader 3: A reading from The National Black Catholic Sisters’ Conference response to Archbishop Gomez’s controversial statement about Black Lives Matter in 2021:

We are especially troubled by your comment: “...the Church has been ‘antiracist’ from the beginning”. With all due respect, Archbishop, do you not know the history of the Church’s [involvement](#) with the slave trade, with the [segregation](#) of churches; with black people often being relegated to the back of churches and forced to receive Holy Communion after white parishioners; and the [rejection](#) of black men and women who desired to enter seminaries and religious communities? Over four hundred years of slavery, trauma, pain, disenfranchisement, and brutal violence have been a part of the fabric of this nation and the American Catholic Church.

Black Lives Matter grew out of the frustration of seeing black lives struck down over and over again with no accountability. Scripture tells us that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. Jesus tells us in Matthew 19:19 to “love your neighbor as yourselves”. When African-American lives are systematically devalued in this country and in the Catholic Church, we must speak out. BLM is not a pseudo-religion; nor is it a “dangerous substitute for true religion”. It is a movement very much in the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching. It does not nor has it ever “served as a replacement for “traditional Christian beliefs”. If we intend to proclaim the authentic gospel of Jesus, we must acknowledge our sinfulness as a Church as it pertains to the sin of racism and give more than lip service to combating racism in our Church and nation. It is time for a resolute

effort on the part of all people of goodwill and most especially on the part of our Church leaders. *Sung Response*

From: <https://www.blackcatholicmessenger.org/nbsc-gomez-statement/>

Reader 4: A reading from Sr. Norma Pimentel on restoring humanity to US Immigration policy:

Immigrant families are not criminals. Immigrant families are like our families, like our neighbors. They're good people who are entering our country and coming to the United States only simply because they're fleeing away from violence and they want to be safe. Unfortunately, what we see at the border is terrible. People are hurting and suffering. Thousands of them are. And mostly I feel it's because of those walls that we put up, that we have in our hearts, that makes us not care.

I think that it is true that we must keep our country safe, that we must make sure who enters our country, that criminals should be put away. But it is also true that we must not lose our humanity in doing this. That we must have policies and procedures that do not contribute to the human suffering that people are already suffering. And that we can find solutions that are respectful to all human life. We can do this, if we can allow the best in us to come out. *Sung Response.*

From: https://www.ted.com/talks/norma_pimentel_restoring_human_dignity_at_the_us_southern_border/transcript

Reader 5: A reading from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious on Responding faithfully to our current times:

We are now facing a time that differs in many significant ways from any previous period in which most of us have lived. Lives all around us are at stake. All evidence shows that we will be seeing an increase in moral violations.

In the time ahead, we will need to be women who stay informed, listen carefully to all voices and perspectives, and engage in serious and deep discernment to make wise choices so that we do not contribute hatred, fear, division, or violence to the world. Our decisions should lead us to become even more fully who we are called to be – bearers of love who refuse to relinquish our moral authority nor languish in despair. May we wholeheartedly embrace the call of the church to be people of hope and live this call with all our being for the sake of the world and its future. *Sung Response.*

From: <https://www.lcwr.org/news/a-response-from-the-leadership-conference-of-women-religious-to-these-times>

Sung Gospel Acclamation:

The Gospel Reading from John is an expansion of the assigned Gospel for the day, which omits John 20:3-10. It would be appropriate to highlight its place of privilege in this liturgy with a sung Gospel Acclamation. Use an acclamation with which your community is familiar – perhaps the same one you use for the Easter Season. The assigned antiphon verse is: “Tell us, Mary, what did you see on the way? I saw the glory of the risen Christ, I saw his empty tomb.”

Gospel John 20:1-18

Leader: A reading from the Gospel According to John:

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb.

So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple and told them, “They have taken the Rabbi from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.”

So Peter and the other disciple went out toward to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in.

When Simon Peter arrived after, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered Jesus’ head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place.

Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned home.

But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been.

And they said to her, “Why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken my Rabbi, and I don’t know where they laid him.”

When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”

She thought it was the gardener and said,
 “Please, if you carried Jesus away, tell me where you laid him,
 and I will take him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary!”
 She turned and said in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!,” which means my Teacher.

Jesus said to her, “Stop holding on to me,
 for I have not yet ascended to God.
 But go to the sisters and brothers and tell them,
 ‘I am going to my Abba God and your Abba God.’”

Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples,
 “I have seen the Teacher,” and what the savior told her.

The Good News of Our Salvation

ALL: Praise to you, O Christ.

Preaching Suggestions

- Invite a woman from your community to reflect on the theme “Women Speaking Truth to Power”
- Invite a shared reflection from the community gathered
 - What truths were revealed to you in our readings? How did they impact you? What comforted you? What challenged you?
 - What other truths need to be “spoken” today?
- If you will invite sharing after the guided meditation (below) you may consider forgoing formal preaching or shared reflection and move directly into the ritual after a moment of reflective silence.

RITUAL: A GUIDED CREATIVE MEDITATION

For this guided meditation, each participant will need a piece of paper and a writing/drawing tool. You may consider inviting participants to bring their own journal and pen, if they would like. You may also consider having a variety of stationary and pens, markers, crayons, coloring pencils, etc. available for use. During this meditation, the leader will ask participants to be creative – through drawing, writing, doodling, etc. Depending upon the size of your congregation and the time available, you may invite participants to share about their drawing or hang up their piece of paper on a wall or bulletin board. The sharing after this meditation may also take the place of a shared reflection after the gospel.

Leader: Tonight we invite you to engage with creativity. Our celebration invites us into the work of speaking truth to power—not only with our words, but with our whole selves. Truth can rise in protest or in presence, in art, in action, in stillness. In this meditation, we'll listen for the truth within us and express it through drawing or writing. And we remember Mary Magdalene—companion of Christ, witness to resurrection—who stood when others fled, and proclaimed what others denied. May her courage guide us as we begin.

Begin by arriving. Sit comfortably. Light a candle if you have one.

Close your eyes and breathe deeply. Inhale through your nose...
and exhale slowly through your mouth.
Let the distractions settle. Let your breath draw you into stillness.

In this moment, call to mind all those throughout history who have spoken truth to power—quietly or boldly, publicly or privately, in word or in witness.

Among them walks Mary Magdalene.
Not as a saint above us, but as a woman who stood her ground—
at the foot of the cross,
at the mouth of the tomb,
in the company of those who dismissed her.

Let her be beside you now.
A witness. A friend. A fellow truth-teller.

(Take a 30 second pause)

Speaking truth to power can be anxiety inducing.
It can cost reputation, comfort, security, even community.
And yet, something in us knows when it is time to speak, to resist, to name what must be named.

Speaking the truth doesn't always mean raising your voice.
Sometimes it looks like refusal. Or presence. Or art. Or quiet solidarity.

A body that refuses to move.
A hand that creates protest signs, or poetry.
A life that insists on joy in the face of oppression.
A truth spoken once—and then lived out again and again.

What power are you being called to confront?
What truth lives in your body, aching to be released?

Where have you been silent too long?
Where have you already spoken—but been unheard, dismissed, or punished?

Mary Magdalene didn't need permission to proclaim the resurrection.
She had the truth. And the Truth had her.

Invite people to look at their blank paper

Turn to your page.

You are invited to **write, draw, or mark the paper** as a way of *embodying your truth*. Let this be your act of resistance, your act of reclaiming, your act of clarity.

Consider the following prompts, and respond to whichever one resonates:

If I could speak my truth without fear, I would say...

The power I most need to confront is...

This is what my truth looks like (draw it).

My form of truth-telling is... (a protest, a boundary, a song, a choice, a letter, a breath...)

When I imagine justice, it feels like...

Allow time for those gathered to write, draw, or mark on their paper...

There is no wrong way to do this.
Truth-telling can take the form of art.
Let your body and imagination guide you.

Take a moment to sit with what you've created.
Look at it with kindness. What do you notice? What feels true? What feels challenging?

Hold your paper gently in your hands, as if holding something sacred.

A final word:

Truth is not always welcome.
But it is always holy.

Speak it in art.
Speak it in silence.
Speak it in action.
Speak it in relationship.

And when you need courage, remember you are not alone.
Mary Magdalene walks beside you. So do many others.
This work is hard. And this work is holy and sacred.

Allow time for quiet reflection. At this point, you may invite participants to share about what is on their paper. Alternatively, you may ask them to think of one or two words that encapsulates their "truth" and ask each participant to speak that word to the others. Another option is to invite participants to reverently place their on an altar or table, or hang them up on a wall or bulletin board – or any combination of these. If hosting your celebration on Zoom or another virtual platform, consider asking participants to hold their paper up to the camera.

Then continue to the closing rites on the next page.

CONCLUDING RITES

Closing Prayer:

Leader: Let us pray,

**All: Living, Speaking God,
Open us to your voice as you speak today.
Shatter the silence, the silencing, the trepidation to speak.
Root us in your holy courage
and help us to know that we are called by name,
to create, with Your Power, the kin-dom you dream for us.
This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen!**

Blessing:

Leader: And may God fill us with hope,
May the peace of Christ abound in our hearts and minds,
and may the Holy Spirit gift and guide us
(making Sign of the Cross) now and forever,

ALL: AMEN.

Dismissal:

Leader: Our liturgy – our work - continues,
As we go forth to speak Divine Truth to power.

All: Thanks be to God.

Closing Song:

Songs that emphasize women, justice, and mission are all appropriate. Some possibilities include:

Sing a New Church by Delores Dufner and Jeffrey Honoré

Let Justice Roll Like a River by Marty Haugen

Women of the Church by Carey Landry

You Shall Be My Witnesses by Miriam Therese Winter

Prayer Service Developed by FutureChurch Program Associate, Olivia Hastie.