

Outcomes:

H1 explains aspects of religions and belief systems

H2 describes and analyses the influences of religion and belief systems on individuals and society

H4 describes and analyses how aspects of religious traditions are expressed by their adherents

H5 evaluates the influence of religious traditions in the life of adherents

H6 organises, analyses and synthesises relevant information about religion from a variety of sources, considering usefulness, validity and bias

H7 conducts effective research about religion and evaluates the findings from the research

H8 uses appropriate terminology related to religion and belief systems

H9 coherently and effectively communicates information, ideas and issues using appropriate written, oral and graphic forms

Students learn about:

- The contribution to Christianity of ONE significant person OR school of thought, other than Jesus

- The effect of that person OR

Students learn to:

- *Explain* the contribution to the development and expression of Christianity of ONE significant person OR school of thought, other than Jesus
- *Analyse* the impact of this person OR school of thought on Christianity

Students learn to:

Analyse

Identify components and the relationship between them; draw out and relate implications

Explain

Relate cause and effect; make the relationship evident; provide why and/or how



MARY

OF

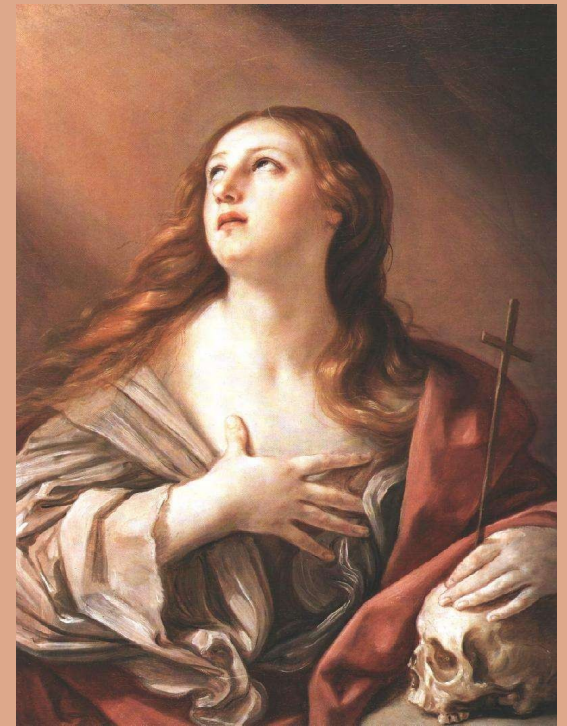
MAGDALA

WHO WAS MARY OF MAGDALA?

Mary of Magdala was one of the earliest and most devoted followers of Jesus. She was among those who saw him die on the cross and she was the first person to see him alive after the resurrection.

Mary of Magdala is also known as:

- ❖ Mary Magdalene
- ❖ The Magdalene
- ❖ Mary Magdala



A Galilean, from Magdala

The Magdalene is identified in relation to a city (Lk 8:2) and is not identified in relation to another person; she is not anyone's mother, wife or sister. This is **extremely** unusual for Biblical women

Her surname comes from her home town of Magdala – a commercial fishing town on Lake Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee). Named Tarichea in Greek, Magdala was a trade centre on an international trade route

We know from recent archaeological excavation that there was a synagogue there

In rabbinic literature of the 1st century the town had developed a bad reputation seeming to stem from corruption brought about by excessive wealth. Perhaps this element had something to do with the confusion over attributing the character of the 'sinner' to MM



Always named first

In all 4 gospels MM is named first when the Galilean women are mentioned

For example, Mk 15:40; Mk 15:47; Mk 16:1; Mt 27:56;
Lk 8:2; Jn 20:1

The only exception is Jn 19:25

This would indicate that MM was a leader, or at the very least a significant member of the community (cf Nag Hammadi Texts esp. Gospel of Philip and Gospel of Mary)

Healed by

Jesus

MM was healed of demonic possession (Mk 16:9; and Lk 8:2)

The ancients attributed many illnesses to demonic possession, though today we might diagnose these people as epileptics or schizophrenics

Nothing though in the Scriptures suggests MM was possessed because she was sinful

The Magdalene suffered from a serious mental illness and was one of those women who came to follow Jesus as a result of her cure

Witness to the Crucifixion

All 4 Gospels place MM at the Crucifixion, Death and Burial of Jesus

See Mk 15:40; Mt 27:56; Jn 19:25 (Crucifixion and Death)

See Mk 15:47; Mt 27:61; Lk 23:55; (Burial)

This presence of the women contrasts starkly with the absence of the male disciples

Witness to the

Resurrection
All 4 Gospels place MM as witness to the Resurrection (Mk 16:9-11; Mt 28:1-10; Lk 24:1-12)

MM as witness to the resurrection is especially highlighted in the Gospel of John: Jn 20:1-18

Not only does MM witness the Risen Lord, but she is commissioned by Jesus to go and tell the Apostles – Jn 20:17. By Paul's own definition, this makes MM *Apostle to the Apostles* (1 Cor 9:1)

MM witness to the Risen Lord is also acknowledged in the Gnostic *Gospel of Peter*



Jesus chose to appear to Mary Magdalene first after the resurrection and she was then commissioned by Jesus to go out to others and tell them of the good news – ‘Apostle to the Apostles’

Misconceptions
surrounding the
identity of Mary
Magdalene and
possible reasons for
this

Mary Magdalene



- Mary Magdalene is not the 'repentant' woman of scripture. She was not the 'woman of the city who was a sinner'.
- Luke 7 introduces the one 'who was a sinner' with no introduction – a woman of the streets, probably a prostitute – wanting to be treated as

Mary Magdalene

- Luke 8 is talking about the women disciples of Jesus. Mary from the town of Magdala is anything but a woman of the streets.
- She is important enough to be identified ~ an



Why the confusion?

The misinterpretation of Mary as a converted prostitute is created by a merging of texts about:

- iii) an unknown woman who signs Jesus' impending death by breaking a jar of funerary ointment on his head (Mark 14:3-9), a prophetic gesture, not an expression of penitence for sin).
- iv) With Luke's rewriting of the incident as the story of an unnamed woman sinner who breaks the ointment on Jesus' feet as a sign of penitence (Luke 8:3/50)



By combining these texts, the Church paints a picture of Mary Magdalene as a weeping sinner, thereby displacing her from her original high status as the leader of the faithful remnant of Jesus' apostles who founds the Church's preaching of the resurrection.

Sinner or disciple?

- The unnamed woman becomes Mary Magdalene. All women are attributed with the same weakness and sin. One sins and they all sin. The translators of the Bible attributed the worst sin they could to this woman, **prostitution** – a sin of sexuality and one only a woman could commit.
- The confusion between the sinner and the disciple can also be attributed to Gregory the Great and misidentification in the Latin Church.
- On September 14, 591 Pope Gregory the Great gave a homily in Rome that pronounced that Mary Magdalene, Luke's unnamed sinner, and Mary of

The teaching of Gregory was supported by artists who repeatedly put Mary Magdalene into the role of the repentant sinner and the error was seldom, if ever, officially corrected.

The image of sinner has been ingrained in the imaginations of centuries of Christians and is one that continues to be depicted in art.



Explain the contribution to the development and expression of Christianity of ONE significant person OR school of thought, other than Jesus



The attitude to women in 1st century Palestine

The structure of Israel was patriarchal; women were viewed in a negative manner; seen as disposable property; if they committed adultery it was a crime against their husband/father/brother; they were segregated from men in the temple/synagogue; menstruating women were seen as unclean

Jesus went against the Jewish culture of the time – he believed women should be treated equally to men, Jesus spoke to them, touched them, and stood up for them when they were mistreated. He treated women with dignity.

An example of Jesus treating women very differently to the culture of the time was his treatment of Mary Magdalene

Mary's relationship with Jesus

The Magdalene had a close and unique relationship with Jesus. All 4 evangelists record her relationship with Jesus, which gives witness to the significance of Jesus in her life and of her in Jesus' life.

MM left her home to follow Jesus, and it is believed she was among several well-off, independent women who financially supported Jesus' ministry. She was chosen by him to be a disciple and lead the group of women who followed Jesus. She appears to have been the leader among the women disciples

She may have become a follower of Jesus when he taught in that area during the early part of his ministry. She followed Jesus from town to town ~ Lk 8:2, Mt 27:56; Mk 15:41

Mary as one of the healed

MM was possessed by seven demons when Jesus healed her (Mk 16:9; Lk 8:2).

Seven is significant not only in Semitic texts but also in Greek, Egyptian and Babylonian cultures, among others. For these cultures *seven* was symbolic for the 4 phases of the moon (each of *seven* days) and later the *seven* observable planets.

For the Hebrews, *seven* denoted the days of the week and the institution of the Sabbath day. Also, it was connected to the Sabbatical Year (Gen 2:2-3; 1 Macc 6:53).



In the Gospels, the number seven is used on several occasions, which highlights its role as a significant and symbolic number.

The symbolism of *seven* ultimately signifies **totality** and **completeness**. In the case of MM, the fact that she was possessed of *seven* demons tells us that her illness was **complete and all consuming**.

Therefore, Jesus' healing of MM demonstrates the complete power of Jesus and the strength of his power that it could overcome the most complete of evilness.

In this way MM gives emphasis to Jesus' divinity.



From the beginning her view has been ignored, unappreciated. The first to see the Risen Lord – those with more power have sought to marginalise her. Yet she is faithful. She remains. She cannot be silenced.

(Ellen Turner)

The Magdalene cannot be silenced because her role in the life of Jesus and those who travelled with him, and her **contribution** to the life of the early Church, is too important to be forgotten. While undoubtedly remembered as the woman who witnessed the Resurrection, MM contribution to the community of disciples and her contribution to the early churches go beyond one profound experience of the Risen Jesus.

following titles: apostle, because she had seen the Lord; disciple because she had followed the Lord; deacon because she had ministered to him and to his other disciples; evangeliser because she was sent out with the message that Jesus Christ had risen; and leader because the written evidence portrays her thus.

*The irrefutable fact is that the name of Mary of Magdala is essentially bound up with the central Christian reality – humankind's realisation that **resurrection** had occurred.*

- Mary Thompson



Apostle to the Apostles

MM can be confidently given the title Apostle to the apostles because of her direct commissioning by Jesus at the tomb (Jn 20:17).

By St Paul's own definition of *apostle* ie someone who has had a direct experience of the Risen Christ, MM is the apostle to the apostles (1 Cor 9:1).

When MM announces *I have seen the Lord* she uses a formula of authority, one that confirms her credentials as an apostle. This is the same one that Paul uses to adamantly insist on his own apostolic authority (Rom 1:1). This is the same formula that is used by others who claim apostolic status (Lk 24:34; Jn 20:25).

MM's title Apostle to the Apostles is also confirmed in the fact that she was not only commissioned by Jesus, but that she fulfilled her commissioning, announcing to the apostles and disciples Jesus' message. MM's announcement is received and believed in the community as when Jesus appears again he does not repeat what MM had told them – he presumes they know it!

Disciple

MM is presented as a faithful and ideal disciple.

Following her experience of a wondrous act of Jesus MM is called to follow him and remained with him.

This act of leaving her home and following Jesus signifies her wholehearted dedication to Jesus and his mission and sets MM apart as an example of service and ministry.



Mark names two criteria for genuine discipleship:

- following Jesus, even at the risk of one's own life (Mk 8:34-38); and,
- becoming a servant of all (Mk 9:35; 10:42-45)

Those who travelled with Jesus abandoned home, family, property, and security. In solidarity with the poor they shared Jesus' propertyless existence and placed all their hope in the inbreaking of the reign of God. The consequence of this radical ethos of abandonment and letting-go within the community of disciples was the equality of all.

Service, which was practiced by all disciples, male and female, was the surrender of time, strength, and abilities, solidarity with one's siblings in the reign of God; proclamation of the reign of God now close at hand, including preaching, healing the sick, and the offer of divine peace (Mt 10:7-8, 12-13; Lk 9:2, 10:5).

The passage in Mk 15:40-41 specifically names Mary of Magdala as a disciple and describes her performing these two essential elements of discipleship.



Deacon

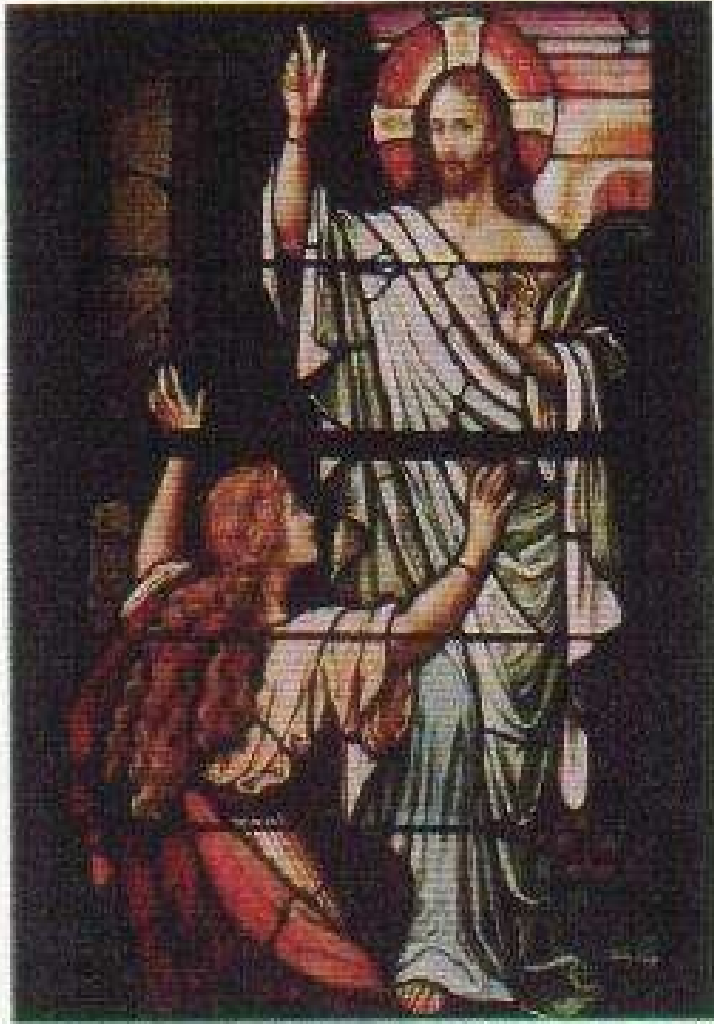
MM is the woman who becomes the first woman minister.

Evangeliser



In the Gospel of John, MM is one of Jesus' primary proclaimers (Jn 20:18).

Leade



[Saint Mary Magdalene Parish](#) has a beautiful stained glass relief image.

MM was a leader of both the women (MM is continually mentioned in the Gospels as the leading woman disciple in Jesus' company) and the community (the Gnostic tradition made her the exemplar of women's apostolic authority and the disciple closest to Jesus).

Mary Magdalene had the qualities of a leader (her position is akin to Miriam's position in the Exodus community).

In all the Gospels, MM plays the part of the leader of the company of women who remain faithful to Jesus at the cross when the male disciples ran away.



Especially indicative of MM's role of leadership of the women in particular and the community in general, is the fact that after the Calvary experience, the group reforms around her and at dawn sets out for the tomb of Jesus (Mk 16:1-2; Mt 28: 1; Lk 24: 1-10).

MM role of leadership is particularly evident in the Gnostic writing, especially the *Gospel of Mary* where the rivalry between Peter and MM is quite explicit.

Indeed, the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* places Mary in a position equal to Peter:

'Levi...replied to Peter: "Peter, you are always angry. Now look, you are treating this woman as you would treat an

According to Lk (8:3) she contributed wealth (the Greek possessive pronoun, *autais*, is feminine plural so it can only mean that the resources belonged to the women). MM, Joanna and Susanna, along with the other Galilean women, were presented in the Gospel of Luke as wealthy patrons of the mission (cf Mk 15:40-41; Mt 27: 55-56).

While it is true that the patriarchal system ensured that women were economically dependent under some circumstances women could inherit money and property (Num 27: 8). Many women earned money by working, eg Lydia and Prisca.

Some scholars propose MM, etc were not using their own

Witness to the Resurrection



All 4 gospels place MM as the only person, male or female, as the first witness to the Resurrection, and announcing the message indicates undeniable prominence in the community.

- ❖ Mk 16: 9-11
- ❖ Mt 28: 1-10
- ❖ Lk 24: 1-12
- ❖ Jn 20: 1-18

The New Testament Eve

- The Magdalene became the New Testament Eve whose sin had been forgiven but whose character was forever cast in question.
- As a result of this error her strength and special calling have been overlooked.
- The prominence given her to by Jesus and the prominence given to women in general was also overlooked.
- Some feminist theologians have no doubt that The Magdalene's reputation was deliberately altered to

The
Magdalene
in Art



Hubert van Eyck
The Three Mary's at the Tomb
c. 1425



Rogier van der Weyden
The Magdalene Reading



Fra Angelico

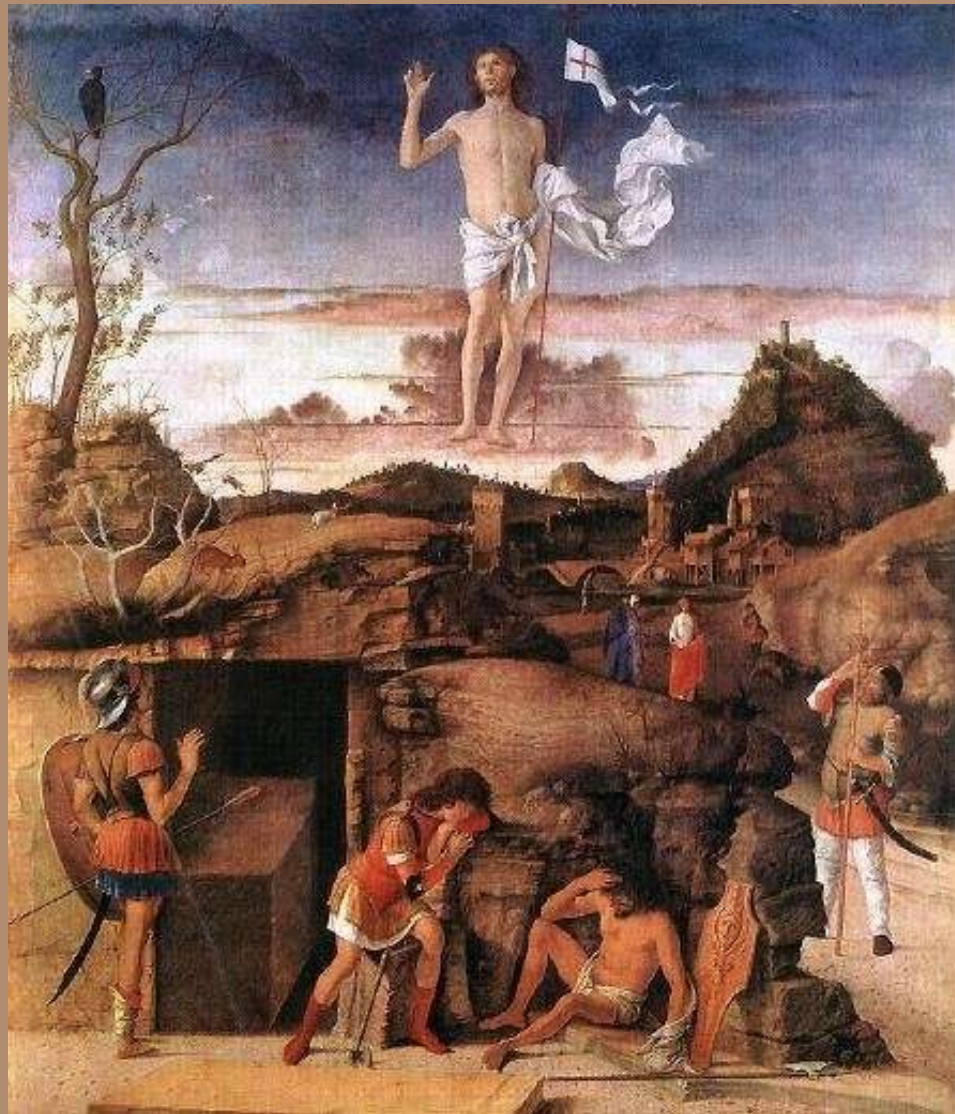
*Mary Magdalene
Sees the Risen
Lord*



Carlo Crivelli
Mary Magdalene
c. 1487



Sandro Botticelli
Lamentation over the Dead Christ



Giovanni Bellini
Resurrection of Christ
c. 1475-79

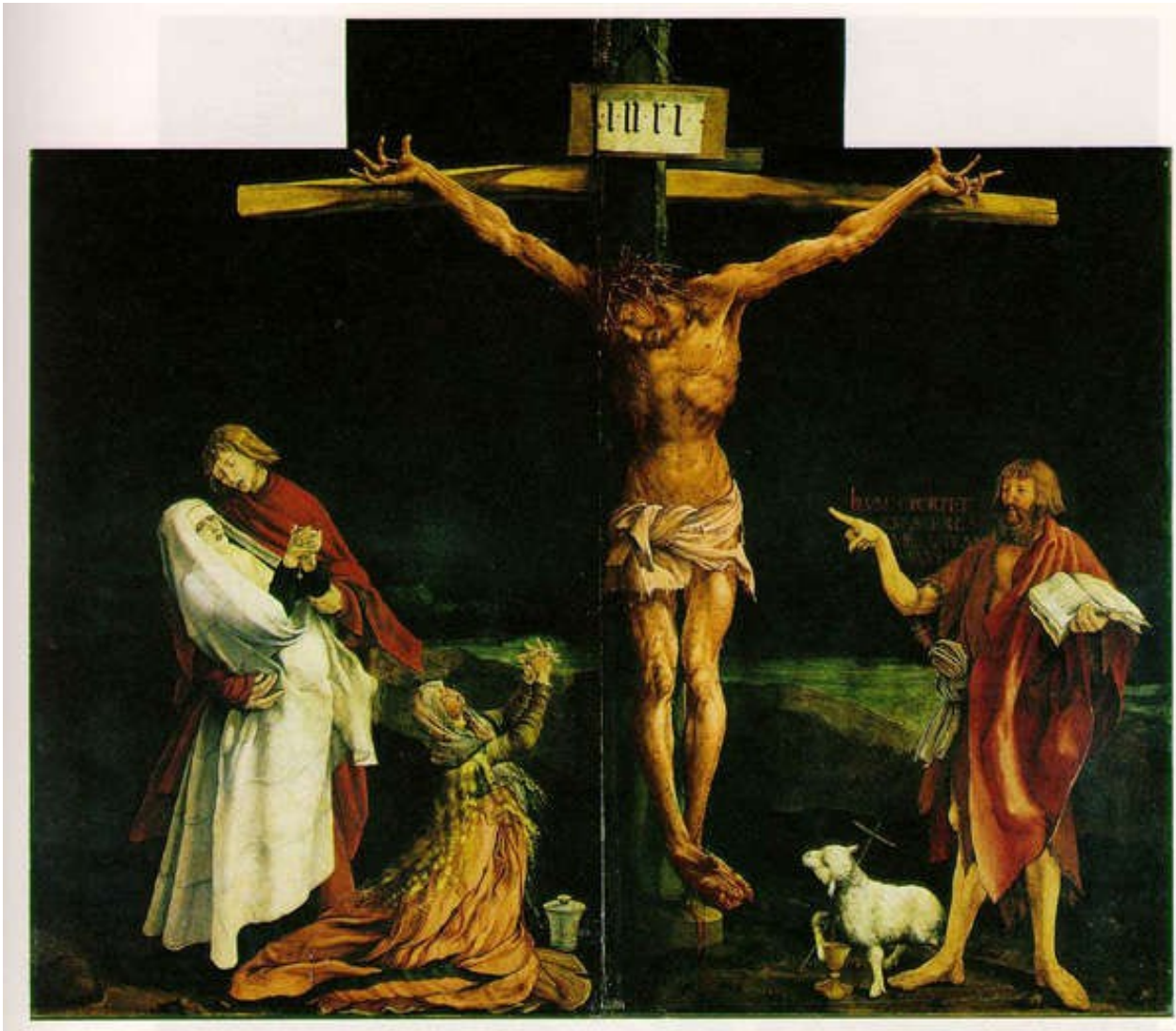


Hugo van der Goes

*Sts Mary and Mary
Magdalene with Maria
Portinari*

Albrecht Durer
*Mourning on
Christ's Death*
c. 1500







Michelangelo

*The Deposition
of Christ*

1540s



Quentin Massys

Christ on the Cross
1515



Master of the Legend of
the Magdalene and
workshop

Mary Magdalene



Gerard David

*The Penitent Mary
Magdalene*
c. 1510/15



Jan van Scorel
Mary Magdalen
c. 1530

Giovanni Battista Rosso

The Deposition
1521



Titan

Noli Me Tangere
1511-15





Pieter Bruegel
Christ Carrying the Cross
1564



Tintoretto
In the House of Mary and Martha



El Greco

*Penitent
Magdalene*
1585-1590



Caravaggio
Martha and Mary Magdalene
c. 1598-99



Peter Paul Rubens
Christ and Mary
1618



Georges de La Tour

*The Penitent
Magdalene*



Rembrandt
*The Risen Christ Appearing to Mary
Magdalene*



Jan Vermeer

Christ in the
House of
Martha and
Mary
before 1654/55



The Magdalene's name has survived the redactions and editing of the early ages. This indicates she was too well known in the early community for her name to be suppressed. She was part of an oral tradition too well attested to admit of change.

It is strong evidence that she had importance and authority. This is especially so considering the canonical gospels were written away from Galilee and significantly later than the events they describe. It is impossible, then, to deny that the traditions about Mary of Magdala were firmly entrenched and widespread.

Mary Magdalene's penitent prostitute label was a misnomer and her true biblical portrait is being resurrected, and this 'apostle to the apostles' is finally taking her rightful place in history as a beloved disciple of Jesus and as a prominent early church leader.



Mary of Magdala's life story showed all believers that there is grace with God, however far they had departed from God. Her zeal, devotion and dedication have gone down as models in history (though perhaps not always for the right reasons!).

The participation of the Magdalene in the continuation of the mission of Christ exemplifies her complete and lasting mental, emotional and physical wellness along with her strong spiritual faith in the Risen Lord and her God.

Feminists: Feminist theologians have been reclaiming the importance of MM both as leader and as one of the founders of Christianity – apostle to the apostles (1969 – Vatican II). They put forward a strong argument for women in leadership roles in the Church.

Orthodox Church : The Magdalene has always been revered as a saint – her status has never changed. There has never been any suggestion of her as ‘sinner’.

The Orthodox Church refers to MM as *myrrhbearer* in reference to the ointment she was taking to the tomb of Jesus.

Catholic Church: The Catholic church has a long and varied history with the Magdalene. Initially identified as a 'sinner' and 'prostitute', the Vatican recognised in 1969 that MM was not either of these women.

The Vatican also changed the reading on The Magdalene's Feast Day (July 22) from Lk 7: 36-39 to Jn 20: 1-2, 11-12 (in 1969).

The Vatican dropped the title Penitent from her title.

Among other Churches that adore MM are the Anglican and the Lutheran Churches.