

**Miriam of Magdala/Mary Magdalene/Mary of Magdala/Magdalene**  
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Feast Day - July 22

Sources of the stories about Miriam of Magdala are the four gospels from which confusion arose about her true identity. She has been maligned, misunderstood and is the victim of mistaken identity. Miriam has been confused with an un-named woman who was responsible for the anointing of Jesus in the home of Simon the leper; she has been called a sinner; and confused with Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. I will attempt to clear the fog so that when we ask, "Will the real Miriam of Magdala please stand?" - she will.

If we look at the facts as related in the gospels, this is what we find:

Miriam as one of the company who followed Jesus during his public ministry - a disciple.

- In Luke's Gospel (8: 1-3) we are told, "Jesus preached and proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God, with the twelve and Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna who provided for all out of their own resources."

Mary as one of those present at the crucifixion

- In Matthew's gospel (27:38) ... many women were there... among them Mary Magdalene
- In Mark (15:27): women present among them, Mary Magdalene
- In Luke (23:25): acquaintances and the women from Galilee . Later in Luke's account of the resurrection these women are named, one of whom is Mary Magdalene
- In John (17. 17): Standing by the cross were his mother and Mary Magdalene

Mary at the resurrection

- Matt (28:1i) says, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre.
- Mark ( 16. 1 ) Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome went to the tomb

- Luke (24: 1) the women who had come from Galilee went to the tomb with spices. Included later in Luke's account of the resurrection these women are named, one of them Mary Magdalene.
- John (20: 1) Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw it was empty; it's John's gospel where Jesus appears to Mary as we heard read to us this morning.

From these accounts it is obvious that Mary Magdalene is a primary witness to significant events in Jesus' life: his preaching, crucifixion and resurrection. "There is no biblical story that depicts Mary Magdalene as a prostitute or any other kind of sinner and none that shows her either anointing Jesus or being forgiven for her sins". (Elizabeth Johnson, Friends of God and Prophets p. 149)

"In all texts where she appears she acts as a wisdom figure with the personal autonomy of her own relationship with God, a freedom always related to the circle of women and men disciples in whose stories her own is embedded. In correcting this distortion of the historical memory of Mary Magdalene, women find a companion whose memory cheers them with a dynamic flash of faithful friendship, spiritual insight and self-confident leadership." (Johnson, p. 150) Let her be a model for all of us who have been misrepresented or stereotyped by those in power; an oppression that can paralyze one person as well as a whole community. Magdalene was confident in the freeing power of God's love for her and used that power to bring God's message of love to those in her company as well as to us today. Let us go and do likewise.

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