

and his followers. Saint Mary Magdalene's redemption and subsequent life of devotion to Christ serve as a powerful example of Christ's love and power.

While some early Christians sought to downplay Mary's influence, labelling her a prostitute, others sought to accentuate it. The Gospel of Mary, a text dating from the second century A.D. that surfaced in Egypt in 1896, placed Mary Magdalene above Jesus' male disciples in knowledge and influence. She also featured prominently in the so called Gnostic Gospels, a group of texts believed to have been written by early Christians as far back as the second century A. D., but not discovered until 1945, near the Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi. One of these texts, known as the Gospel of Philip, referred to Mary Magdalene as Jesus's companion and claimed that Jesus loved her more than other disciples. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great (in a sermon) made it official that Mary was a penitent prostitute. Finally, in 1969, the Church admitted that the text of the Bible does not support that interpretation. In 2016, Pope Francis raised to a liturgical feast the memorial of St. Mary Magdalene, 22 July. *(Source: Butler's Lives of the Saints, Sarah Pruitt – History of Saints -Inspirational Picture) - Bernard Kellett*

Entrance antiphon: O Lord, I trust in your merciful love. My heart will rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord who has been bountiful with me.

First Reading: Leviticus 19: 1-2, 17-18

Psalm 102: Response: The Lord is compassion and love.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 3: 16-23

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him. Alleluia!

Gospel: Matthew 5:38-48

Memorial Acclamation: Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your cross and resurrection you have set us free.

Communion Antiphon: I will recount all your wonders, I will rejoice in you and be glad, and sing psalms to your name, O Most High.



Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A, 2023 Weekly Reflection:

What Saint Mary Magdalene Teaches us

about Redemption and Devotion: Mentioned fourteen times in the gospels, St Mary was a devoted follower of Jesus, who accompanied him through pivotal moments of his ministry- on his last trip to Jerusalem, at the cross, and discovering his resurrection at the tomb. Mary Magdalene is especially significant as the first witness to see Jesus following the resurrection. In a time when women were regarded as second-class citizens, God gave Mary a highly significant honour by appearing to her and charging her to spread the news of his resurrection. At first, the disciples did not want to believe her when she told them. In John's account (John 20:17) three days after Jesus' crucifixion, Mary visits the tomb with Simon Peter and finds it empty, with the burial clothes abandoned. Thinking someone has stolen Jesus' body, she becomes upset and goes out weeping. She is met by two angelic beings who ask her why she is crying. Jesus appears to her in the garden outside the tomb, and at first, she does not recognise him. When she does, she calls out his name, exclaiming "Rabboni" (teacher). He responds: " Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, "I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:17). Mary Magdalene leaves to share the news of the resurrection with the disciples, conveying what Christ told her (V.18).

Mary Magdalene's story is one of redemption. When Jesus met her, she was possessed by seven demons, a number, which by some accounts, is thought to signify the completeness of the extent to which they had overtaken her mind. At that point in time, Mary was deranged, subject to fits of outburst, exhibiting an untidy, dishevelled appearance. However, though her mind was altered, this did not affect her moral condition. Her behaviour may have been extremely abnormal, but it was not extremely immoral. Jesus cast out the demons from Mary, restoring her sanity and redeeming her mental state. Following his restoration of her mind, Mary began to accompany Jesus