

Prayer Service in Honor of Mary of Magdala

Preparation

- Create a sacred space that will be the focal point of the prayer. Cover a small table with a cloth and include four candles, a plant or flowers, and images of Mary Magdalene obtained from the Web site www.magdalene.org.
- Recruit four volunteers, preferably ones who have a dramatic flair, to read one of the four parts of the story of Mary Magdalene. Allow the girls to practice their part of the story.
- Find a piece of solid-colored cloth, large enough for each girl to wear as a veil when reading her part of the story of Mary.
- For more information on Mary of Magdala, read the article “Mary Magdalene: A Case of Mistaken Identity,” found at www.smp.org/voices/Activities.cfm.

Prayer

Leader:

Mary Magdalene—or Mary of Magdala as she is often called—is first in every listing of Jesus’ female disciples. She was the leader of a group of women who followed Jesus from the beginning of his ministry through his death. These same women were instrumental in forming the early church.

Luke indicates that Jesus cured Mary Magdalene of seven evil spirits. All four Gospels name her as one of the first eyewitnesses of Jesus’ Resurrection. From this information, we can presume that she was a special friend and disciple of Jesus and was an important leader among the first Christians. (See *The Catholic Youth Bible*, p. 1278.)

What we don’t hear in the Bible is that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute—a reputation she has had in the church for many years. Her reputation resulted from a case of mistaken identity.

Invite four girls to come forward and light the candles, saying the following after each lighting:

Girl 1: Come, Holy Spirit, open our ears to hear the truth about Mary of Magdala, friend of Jesus.

Girl 2: Come, Holy Spirit, open our hearts to the truth about Mary of Magdala, faithful disciple.

Girl 3: Come, Holy Spirit, open our minds to the truth about Mary of Magdala, first witness to the Resurrection.

Girl 4: Come, Holy Spirit, open our mouths as we speak the truth about Mary of Magdala, apostle to the Apostles.

Invite the first volunteer to read her part of Mary's story. Provide her with a large piece of cloth to wear over her head, as she "becomes" Mary, telling her story.

Mary Magdalene 1:

A reading based on Luke 8:1-3

There I was in Magdala, my hometown in Galilee. I had heard of this Jesus of Nazareth, and I went to see him. It didn't take me long to decide to follow him as part of his group of disciples. I was with my friends Joanna and Susanna. None of us were married, which caused a bit of a scandal in our hometowns because young women our age were usually engaged in their early teens. We were not exactly typical, however.

In fact I had been sick. Back then sickness was usually blamed on demons, but I don't think anyone really understood my problems. But when I met Jesus, he understood everything and just being in his presence helped to heal me of "seven demons" as they were called. I don't think they were really demons—I was just different and kind of radical because I didn't follow the path that most girls followed. I was strong willed and assertive, and once I met Jesus, I knew I had to follow him. I just knew we would become the closest of friends.

After a few seconds of quiet reflection, the first reader (Mary Magdalene 1) removes the cloth from her head and places it carefully on the head of Mary Magdalene 2.

Mary Magdalene 2:

I loved being with this group of men and women called disciples. We all traveled with Jesus and helped him as he went from town to town speaking words that were so inspiring. My friends and I helped support him and the rest of the group financially. It was so neat being with Jesus. He spoke of love, giving us the feeling that everything about him was love. He felt so deeply for people and knew their needs before they ever spoke to him. Just as he healed me, he cured so many others.

But Jesus could also be challenging to some people. We didn't always understand what he said, but others would try to trap him because they thought he was just too radical. I became special friends with him, but it was so hard because I didn't know how to love him. Jesus was different from anyone else I had ever met. He treated me and the other women with such respect and spoke with us as equals.

After a few seconds of quiet reflection, Mary Magdalene 2 removes the cloth from her head and places it carefully on the head of Mary Magdalene 3.

Mary Magdalene 3:

A reading based on Matthew 27:45-56

I couldn't believe it! They actually crucified him—the kind of death that the Romans saved for the worst of criminals. He was anything but criminal, but his words had made enemies of a lot of people. Like when he told the men who were about to kill the woman accused of being an adulteress that they should look at their own sins before they start throwing stones at her. And then he got really mad at those who were making the temple into a marketplace. I have never seen him so mad! He said that they had turned God's house into a den of thieves.

But somehow *they* accused and convicted *him*. When I heard the news, I went with the other women and followed Jesus' path up to the hill where they put him on the cross, nailing his hands and feet. It was too painful to describe. Jesus was such a good person! I couldn't believe this was happening to the man that we all loved so much. It was scary too, but I had to stay there, no matter how hard it was. When he died, something inside of me died as well. My world, my dreams were gone.

After a few seconds of quiet reflection, Mary Magdalene 3 removes the cloth from her head and places it carefully on the head of Mary Magdalene 4.

Mary Magdalene 4:

A reading based on John 20:1-18

My heart was broken. I just had to go to his tomb and be with him in any way that I could. But I found his tomb empty! The guys didn't believe me at first, and they ran to see for themselves that his body was missing. When they saw the empty tomb, they left, but I couldn't. I just stayed there crying my heart out.

But then I saw him! At first I thought it was the gardener, but then he spoke my name. He said "Mary," and I knew it was Jesus from the sound of his voice. There was no mistaking him. I wanted to reach out and hug him and never let him go, but he stopped me because his body was now so different. He gave me a very clear message to go and tell the others. He trusted *me* to spread the most important message of his life—that he was risen from the dead! I went to tell the others, but I wondered if they would believe me now. It was such an incredible event! Would you have believed me?

Leader: *After a few seconds of quiet reflection, ask the participants to share their thoughts and feelings about Mary of Magdala's story:*

- What parts of her story touched you the most?
- What did you learn about Mary of Magdala?
- What else do you know about this important woman of the Gospel?
- Do you think you would have believed her when she returned with her good news?

Lead the group in praying the following petitions. After each petition, invite the response "Be our friend, Mary of Magdala."

Leader: We pray that Jesus will heal the world from all the demons that affect women and girls today, just as he did for his friend and disciple Mary Magdalene.

Leader: For girls who suffer from low self-esteem, we pray to Jesus.
All: Be our friend, Mary of Magdala.

Leader: For girls who suffer from eating disorders of all kinds, we pray to Jesus.
All: Be our friend, Mary of Magdala.

Leader: For all of us who live in a world of double-standard sexuality, we pray to Jesus.
All: Be our friend, Mary of Magdala.

Leader: For girls in all parts of the world who are denied the right to an education and other equal rights, we pray to Jesus.
All: Be our friend, Mary of Magdala.

Leader: For young men and women everywhere in search of authentic love and relationships, we pray to Jesus.
All: Be our friend, Mary of Magdala.

Leader: For those among us whose dreams are shattered because of addictions, we pray to Jesus.
All: Be our friend, Mary of Magdala.

Leader: For all the demons that keep us from being in right relationship with our God, we pray to Jesus.
All: Be our friend, Mary of Magdala.

Invite the participants to offer their own petitions.

Leader: We go now, lifting in prayer all the girls and women in the world, and asking God for the courage to walk with Jesus as his friend and disciple Mary did, no matter the cost.