

Reflection Friday Week 16 St Mary Magdalene 2022

Mary of Magdala was healed of “seven devils” by Jesus. She ministered to him in Galilee and was present at his crucifixion. She was with the women who discovered the empty tomb, and it was to her that the risen Jesus first appeared. Western tradition believed that Mary Magdalene was “the woman who was a sinner” and the sister of Martha and Lazarus of Bethany. There is no evidence either way, and the tradition is tenuous. Although the Western tradition is to be respected and is a real inspiration, it may not necessarily be historical. In 2021 Mary of Bethany was formally recognised as separate, being included in the same feast as Martha and Lazarus, a week after Mary of Magdala. Even without the extra tradition, Mary Magdalene is a unique and important character in the story of the Resurrection, chosen by Christ as one of the first witnesses of the event that changed the world.

From **Gregory the Great**: When Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found the Lord’s body gone, she thought it had been stolen and informed the disciples. After they came and saw the tomb, they believed what Mary had told them. While *the disciples went back home, Mary wept and remained standing outside the tomb*. Burning with the fire of love, she longed for Christ who she thought had been taken away. Perseverance is essential to any good deed: *Whoever perseveres to the end will be saved*. At first, she sought but did not find. By persevering, she found what she was looking for. When our desires are not satisfied, they grow stronger, and becoming stronger they take hold of their object. Holy desires grow with anticipation, and if they do not grow, they are not really desires. Anyone who succeeds in attaining the truth has burned with a great love.

Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek? Jesus asks. In saying whom she is seeking, her love is kindled all the more ardently. *Jesus says: Mary*. Jesus is not recognised when he calls her “woman”; so he calls her by name. He is saying: Recognise me as I recognise you; for I do not know you as I know others; I know you as yourself. Addressed by name, Mary recognises who is speaking. The one whom she sought outwardly was the one who inwardly taught her to keep on searching.