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Mary of Magdala, Apostle to the Apostles

by Dennis Coday

NCR Today

July 22 is the Feast of Mary of Magdala, Apostle to the Apostles. Devotion to Mary of Magdala has grown steady in recent years.

From the **Pray Tell Blog**, we learn that "the early centuries remembered her primarily as the "apostle to the apostles" (apostola apostolorum). The Eastern churches to this day celebrate her as the "eis-apostola," the apostle-like one."

Pope John Paul II in his 1988 encyclical *Dignitatum Mulieris* affirmed her as "Apostle to the Apostles,"

As Ed Conroy noted in a 2005 essay for NCR (See **Resurrecting Mary Magdalene: Historians, mystics and artists debate her significance amid a new surge of popular devotion**):

Mentioned more times in the New Testament than any other woman, she has arguably been the most misrepresented of all Jesus' disciples. She is the subject of intense interest these days; indeed, I discovered a movement of devotees who for different reasons have turned to her as a muse, a champion and a spiritual friend.

Mary of Magdala, has been adopted as patron for Catholic reform groups, such the Cleveland-based FutureChurch, which since 1997 has been promoting the feast day as a means "to educate about women leaders and to model gender balance in scripture proclamation." According to FutureChurch, every year between 200 and 300 Magdala Day celebrations are organized around the world. **Read more about it here.**

Here's some info about FutureChurch's 2012 celebration, scheduled for July 19.

Unheard Homilies: End the Silencing of Catholic Women

On Thursday, July 19 at 7pm, FutureChurch will be celebrating the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala with an evening celebration at River's Edge, 3430 Rocky River Drive, Cleveland, Ohio. Three women will share the homilies they would love to preach at Sunday Mass.

At present, women's voices are silenced in our churches. Stories of female biblical leaders are omitted or made optional in our lectionary and women, indeed all lay people, have recently been forbidden to preach at Mass even though canon law allows it. This deprives both women and men of hearing the Gospel's life-giving message through the lens of female experience.

The focal point of the St. Mary of Magdala prayer celebration will be listening to the "unheard homilies" given by women who refuse to be silenced. They have been asked to preach the homilies they have longed to preach at Mass if they were only permitted - without restraint and without fear of criticism. Woven into the context of prayer, we know these homilies will be inspiring!

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The homilists: **Julie Biroscak** has been engaged in ministry for more than fifteen years. At present she serves as a hospice chaplain, and has also served patients in hospitals, residents in nursing homes, and adults with intellectual disabilities in the L'Arche Community. Julie has an MA in Ministry from Ursuline College, and is a native of Cleveland. **Debbie Dacone** is a local pastoral minister who teaches and preaches as a campus minister, teacher, and spiritual director. She believes that the vocation to preach is rooted in one's Baptism and is honing her vocation to preach at Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis. **Megan T. Wilson-Reitz** is part of the Cleveland Catholic Worker extended community, a mother of two putative Christian radicals, and a lecturer in religious studies at John Carroll University. She presents workshops and retreats on the themes of nonviolence, economic justice and radical discipleship in Scripture.

No charge, but a free will offering will be accepted.

Is there a St. Mary of Magdala celebration planned for your area? Post the information below and we'll do our best to help you get the word out.

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