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## ST. MARY MAGDALENE: “TRUE AND AUTHENTIC EVANGELIZER”



**A**round this time last year, Pope Francis raised the July 22 memorial of St. Mary Magdalene to a feast in a decree titled “Apostolorum Apostola” (“Apostle of the Apostles”). He recognized Saint Mary Magdalene as the first to witness Christ’s resurrection and her role as a **“true and authentic evangelizer”**. She is the first woman other than the Blessed Virgin whose liturgical celebration has been raised to the rank of a feast.

While most liturgical celebrations of individual saints during the year are known formally as memorials, those classified as feasts are reserved for important events in Christian history and for saints of particular significance, such as the Twelve Apostles. In his apostolic letter “Dies Domini” (“The Lord’s Day”), St. John Paul II explained that the *“commemoration of the saints does not obscure the centrality of Christ, but on the contrary extols it, demonstrating as it does the power of the redemption wrought by him.”*

So in this month we turn to St. Mary Magdalene *“who so loved Christ and was so greatly loved by Christ”* who reminds us of the supreme importance of witnessing to the **hope of the resurrection**.

In a reflection on Mary Magdalene given by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006 he stated: *“A disciple of Christ is one who, in the experience of human weakness, has had the humility to ask for his help, has been healed by him and has set out following closely after him, becoming a witness of the*

*power of his merciful love that is stronger than sin and death”.*

This is why we turn to Mary Magdalene who shows us the way. To honor Mary Magdalene is to help us *“reflect more deeply upon the dignity of women, on the new evangelization and on the greatness of the mystery of God’s Mercy.”*

Noting how St. Mary Magdalene was the first eyewitness to the Risen Christ and the first to announce his resurrection to the apostles St. Thomas Aquinas hailed her the **“the Apostle to the Apostles”**. St. Mary Magdalene, announces to the apostles what in turn they will announce to the whole world.

***In today’s world, we are called to do the same. To witness to the hope of the resurrection, the triumph of God’s mercy, his power over death, and his ability to conquer every evil. Amidst all the noise, we are called to witness and focus on the same.***

As our culture is moving farther and farther away from its Christian roots, we need to be reminded of this truth. We are not alone in the struggle for spiritual maturity in our own lives, nor in the struggle to build a culture that reflects and encourages gospel values based in our hope in the resurrection. †

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