

We've probably all heard the question "What's in a name?" Whether we're naming a baby, a pet, a car, a business, or a faith community, there are reasons for choosing that name. Our faith community was named after Mary Magdalene. Today we celebrate Mary Magdalene and our community that bears her name.

Let's reflect on the meaning of Mary Magdalene as a faithful companion, anointing presence, and proclaimer of Good News.

Mary Magdalene was a companion of Jesus and his followers as they taught and shared wisdom teachings, and her faithfulness did not waver. She was steadfast in her companionship to the end, as the Passion of Mary Magdalene pointedly illustrates. In all 4 canonical gospels, she is faithful and unwavering in that momentous time of Jesus' painful death and transition into life again.

How are we called to live her spirit of faithful companionship? In our faith community I have seen us companion one another in joyful moments when grandchildren are born and marriages and birthdays are celebrated. We have supported one another in trying times of illness, death, and other life changes. I will always be grateful for Eileen's mentoring as she companioned me on my journey into priesthood. Thanks, Eileen! And I am grateful to all of you for your faithful companionship as you called me to priesthood and as you continue to lovingly challenge me to greater depth and broader perspectives. Thank you for being faithful companions in so many ways and embodying the spirit of Mary Magdalene. In everyday life, when moms and dads, grandmoms and grandpops spend time with their children and grandchildren and take a real interest in their learning and activities, they are faithful companions. As parents of adult children, even though we companion them differently, our presence, texts, emails, and phone calls make a difference and say we're with you. In our family

when our kids were in college we would call them with a good luck wish before their lacrosse or soccer games and sing good luck to them to the tune of Happy Birthday! When we as aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, friends, and cousins stay connected not only in the good times but in the rough patches as well, we are faithful companions. God has also shown me faithful companionship in an unexpected place. As some of you know, my 92-year-old stepmother Rose is suffering from dementia. The faithful companionship of the Sunrise caregivers and medical staff has brought her to a happy and peaceful place. Rose has also become good friends with the woman living next to her, Gertie. They so enjoy being together and helping each other. Rose helps Gertie with her walking, and Gertie helps Rose with her memory. It is truly uplifting to see the 2 of them faithfully companion and enjoy each other.

Whether it is in a personal or community setting, living Mary Magdalene's faithful companionship can take many forms.

Mary Magdalene was also an anointing presence. In O'Murchu's poem Mary's anointing empowers Jesus to be true to who he is through her touch and by purely being there, as Jesus says:

“Waver now I must not ‘cause by the cross she stands Anointing holy ground.”

Her anointing was love. When we anoint one another with our presence, it is truly an anointing of love. Anointing implies an inner connection or touch at the heart or core level. As I was writing this, I looked out my dining room window and saw Gia, the 3-year-old girl who lives across the street. She anointed me abundantly with joy as she walked with sturdiness and confidence in her bright pink summer dress. Her joyful, loving presence anointed the holy ground she walked on and those who saw her. Our faith communities anoint one another. This morning we are anointed by the joyful, enthusiastic companionship of our sister communities—

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Sanctuary of Peace, Mary Magdalene NE and N. Wales, and the New Jerusalem Community in Wilmington. Thank you gracing us with your presence. Even though we may only see one another occasionally, be assured there is a connection of love and prayerfulness, an anointing we offer one another from a distance. This anointing helps empower all of us, just as Mary Magdalene's anointing empowered Jesus, to be true to who we are as we walk a new path in the catholic tradition. Today during our liturgy we will anoint one another with oil as we ritualize the everyday anointing we offer one another as individuals and as a community.

Finally, Mary Magdalene was a proclaimer of Good News. She proclaimed the Good News of Love that Jesus embodied and taught. That is the resurrection story she proclaimed, and she did so in uncertain times. Mary's gospel today tells us the other disciples were greatly pained and unsure of how to proclaim the good news. Mary proclaimed the Good News of Love as she comforted them and confidently led them to believe God's grace and Jesus' preparation would be enough.

The call of our Mary Magdalene Community today is to proclaim the Good News of Love in the spirit of Mary Magdalene by embodying her qualities of comfort, courage, and confidence. What are some of the unique qualities of our community that boldly proclaim this Good News? Certainly the welcoming spirit embodied by all and especially by our hospitality people Carolyn, Mary, and Kate. A willingness to live a new way of being church that allows each voice to be heard and respected. A companionship and acceptance of questioning and struggle on our journey of faith. A willingness to engage a contemplative process in discerning important issues. An openness of heart and mind to all God's people—an inclusive presence that appreciates the richness of diversity. We have been graced by people of the Jewish and Islamic faiths, as well as other Christian traditions, as they have worshipped with us. In our diversity, *all*

have been invited to be nourished at the table. Time and again I am deeply touched by the depth of our community's homily response—thank you for courageously and trustingly proclaiming your Good News as you share heartfelt life experiences. I have been in pastoral ministry for over 30 years and have had many wonderful and deeply touching experiences. But I must tell you that being in this community has brought me to a depth of freedom and evolving growth that I never before experienced. You have truly been for me a companion, anointer, and proclaimer of Good News. Thank you for embodying the spirit of Mary Magdalene.

So what's in a name? I think one word sums up our call to action as people of the Mary Magdalene Community. That word is Love. For Love is the Good News we proclaim. Love is at the heart of faithful companioning. And Love is the ultimate anointing.

Readings—The Feast of Mary Magdalene

The Passion of Mary Magdalene—John 14: 1a, John 19: 25-26a, Mark 15: 37, 40, Matthew 27: 59-64, Matthew 28: 1-9, Luke 24: 1-3, John 20: 14-18, Mark 14: 9 (Created by Betsey Young, *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene* by Cynthia Bourgeault, pp. 241-42)

Mary's Eschatological Anointing by Diarmuid O'Murchu (*Jesus in the Power of Poetry: A New Voice for Gospel Truth*)
The Gospel of Mary 4:1 – 5:10, 10:15 (*A New New Testament*)