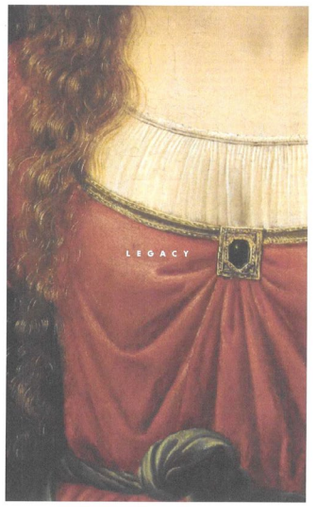
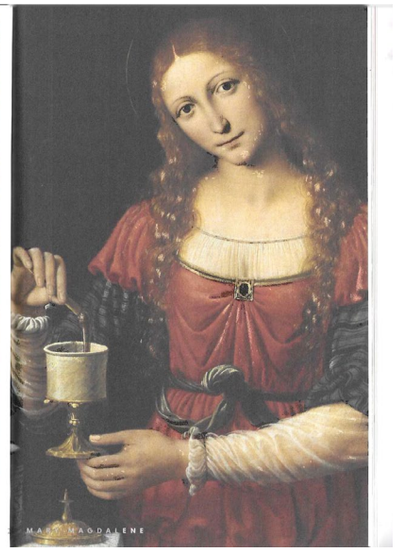




Andrea Solari, showing her as a Myrrhbearer

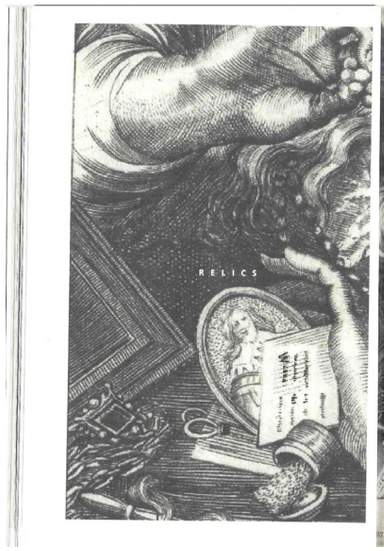
Patristic era

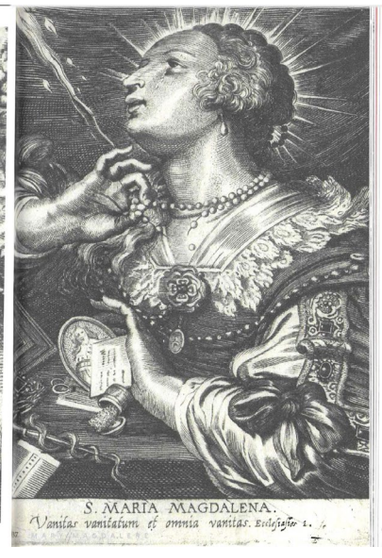
This fresco from the nave of the Dura-Europos church dates to c. 240 and contains the oldest surviving depiction of Mary Magdalene. She is shown alongside two other women (the third now almost completely missing due to extensive damage), each holding a lit torch and a bowl of myrrh, as they approach Jesus's tomb, which is still sealed.

Most of the earliest Church Fathers do not mention Mary Magdalene at all, and those who do mention her usually only discuss her very briefly. In his anti-Christian polemic The True Word, written between 170 and 180, the pagan philosopher Celsus declared that Mary Magdalene was nothing more than "a hysterical female... who either dreamt in a certain state of mind and through wishful thinking had a hallucination due to some mistaken notion, or, which is more likely, wanted to impress others by telling this fantastic tale, and so by this cock-and-bull story to provide a chance for other beggars. defended Christianity against this accusation in his apologetic treatise Against Celsus, pointing to Matthew 28:1, which lists Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" both seeing the resurrected Jesus, thus providing a second witness. Origen also preserves a statement from Celsus that some Christians in his day followed the teachings of a woman named "Mariamme", who is almost certainly Mary Magdalene. Origen merely dismisses this, remarking that Celsus "pours on us a heap of names".

Mary Magdalene has the reputation in Western Christianity as being a repentant prostitute or loose woman; however, these claims are not supported by the canonical gospels, which at no point imply that she had ever been a prostitute or in any way notable for a sinful way of life. The misconception likely arose due to a conflation between Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany (who anoints Jesus's feet in John 11:1–12), and the unnamed "sinful woman" who anoints Jesus's feet in Luke 7:36–50. As early as the third century, the Church Father Tertullian references the touch of "the woman which was a sinner" in effort to prove that Jesus "was not a phantom, but really a solid body". This may indicate that Mary Magdalene was already being conflated with the "sinful women" in Luke 7:36–50, though Tertullian never clearly identifies the woman of whom he speaks as Mary Magdalene. A sermon attributed to Hippolytus of Rome refers to Mary of Bethany and her sister Martha seeking Jesus in the garden like Mary Magdalene in John 20, indicating a conflation between Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene. The sermon describes the conflated women as a "second Eve" who compensates for the disobedience of the first Eve through her obedience. The sermon also explicitly identifies Mary Magdalene and the other women as "apostles". The first clear identification of Mary Magdalene as a redeemed sinner comes from Ephrem the Syrian. Part of the reason for the identification of Mary Magdalene as a sinner may derive from the reputation of her birthplace, Magdala, which, by the late first century, was infamous for its inhabitants' alleged vice and licentiousness.

In one of his preserved sayings, Gregory of Nyssa identifies Mary Magdalene as "the first witness to the resurrection, that she might set straight again by her faith in the resurrection, what was turned over in her transgression". Ambrose, by contrast, not only rejected the





lene in this work. However the work is actually no earlier than the 12th century. Because of Mary Magdalene's position as an apostle, though not one of those who became official witnesses to the resurrection, the Catholic Church honoured her by reciting the Gloria on her feast day, the only woman to be so honoured apart from Mary, the mother of Jesus. In his apostolic letter Mulieris Dignitatem ("On the dignity and vocation of women", parts 67–69) dated August 15, 1988, Pope John Paul II dealt with the Easter events in relation to the women being present at the tomb after the Resurrection, in a section entitled 'First Witnesses of the Resurrection':

> **The women are the first at the tomb. They are the first to find it empty. They are the first to hear 'He is not here. He has risen, as he said.'[Mt 28:6] They are the first to embrace his feet.[cf. Mt 28:9] The women are also the first to be called to announce this truth to the Apostles.[Mt 28:1–10] [Lk 24:–11] The Gospel of John [cf. also Mk 16:9 emphasizes the special role of Mary Magdalene. She is the first to meet the Risen Christ. [...] Hence she came to be called "the apostle of the Apostles". Mary Magdalene was the first eyewitness of the Risen Christ, and for this reason she was also the first to bear witness to him before the Apostles. This event, in a sense, crowns all that has been said previously about Christ entrusting divine truths to women as well as men.**
> **— John Paul II**

On June 10, 2016, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a decree which elevated Mary's liturgical commemoration from an obligatory memorial to a feast day, like that of most of the Apostles (Peter and Paul are commemorated with a solemnity). The Mass and Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office) remained the same as they were, except that a specific preface was added to the Mass to refer to her explicitly as the "Apostle to the Apostles".

Protestantism

Icon of Saint Mary Magdalene depicted as one of the Myrrhbearers with the words "Christ is Risen" in Greek at the top, depicting her discovery of the empty tomb

The 1549 Book of Common Prayer had on July 22 a feast of Saint Mary Magdalene, with the same Scripture readings as in the Tridentine Mass and with a newly composed collect: "Merciful father geue us grace, that we neuer presume to synne through the example of anye creature, but if it shall chaunce vs at any tyme to offende thy dyuine maiestie: that then we maye truly repent, and lament the same, after the example of Mary Magdalene, and by lyuelye faythe obtayne remission of all oure sinnes. throughe the onely merites of thy sonne oure sauiour Christ." The 1552 edition omitted the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene, which was restored to the Book of Common Prayer only after some 400 years.

Modern Protestants honor her as a disciple

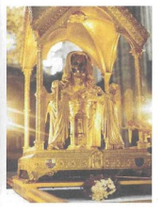
and friend of Jesus. Anglican Christians refer to her as a saint and may follow her example of repentance; While some interpret the Thirty-Nine Articles as forbidding them to call upon her for intercession, other Anglicans, citing the Episcopal burial service, say they can ask the saint to pray for them. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America honors Mary Magdalene on July 22 as an Apostle, albeit as a Lesser Festival. Presbyterians honor her as the "apostle to the apostles" and, in the book Methodist Theology, Kenneth Wilson describes her as, "in effect", one of the "first missionaries".

Bahá'í Faith

There are many references to Mary Magdalene in the writings of the Bahá'í Faith, where she enjoys an exalted status as a heroine of faith and the "archetypal woman of all cycles". `Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of the founder of the religion, said that she was "the channel of confirmation" to Jesus' disciples, a "heroine" who "re-established the faith of the apostles" and was "a light of nearness in his kingdom". `Abdu'l-Bahá also wrote that "her reality is ever shining from the horizon of Christ", "her face is shining and beaming forth on the horizon of the universe forevermore" and that "her candle is, in the assemblage of the world, lighted till eternity". `Abdu'l-Bahá considered her to be the supreme example of how women are completely equal with men in the sight of God and can at times even exceed men in holiness and greatness. Indeed he claimed that she surpassed all the men of her time, and that "crowns studded with the brilliant jewels of guidance" were upon her head.

The Bahá'í writings also expand upon the scarce references to her life in the canonical Gospels, with a wide array of extra-canonical stories about her and sayings which are not recorded in any other extant historical sources. `Abdu'l-Bahá claimed that Mary travelled to Rome and spoke before the Emperor Tiberius, which is presumably why Pilate was later recalled to Rome for his cruel treatment of the Jews (a tradition also attested to in the Eastern Orthodox Church). Bahá'ís have noted parallels between Mary Magdalene and the Bábí heroine-poet Táhirih. The two are similar in many respects, with Mary Magdalene often being viewed as a Christian antecedent of the latter, while Táhirih in her own right could be described as the spiritual return of the Magdalene; especially given their common, shared attributes of "knowledge, steadfastness, courage, virtue and will power". In addition to their importance within the religious movements of Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith as female leaders.

Vélins after Rubens (1600-1659)

Peter Paul Rubens

Many of the alleged relics of the saint are held in Catholic churches in France, especially at Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume. where her skull and the noli me tangere are on display; the latter being a piece of forehead flesh and skin said to be from the spot touched by Jesus at the post-resurrection encounter in the garden. A tible also kept at Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume is the object of an annual procession. Her left hand relic is kept in the Simonopetra Monastery on Mount Athos. Her left hand relic is kept in the Simonopetra Monastery on Mount Athos.