



St. Mary Magdalene

July 22

Saint Mary was from Magdala in Galilee on the Sea of Tiberias, and for this was named Magdalene. When the Lord Jesus cast out seven demons from her, from which she had been suffering, she became His faithful and inseparable disciple, following Him and ministering unto Him even to the time of His crucifixion and burial.

Then, returning to Jerusalem together with the rest of the Myrrh-bearers, she prepared the fragrant spices for anointing the body of the Lord. And on the Lord's Day they came very early to the tomb, even before the Angels appeared declaring the Resurrection of the Lord. When Mary Magdalene saw the stone taken away from the tomb, she ran and proclaimed it to Peter and John. And returning immediately to the tomb and weeping outside, she was deemed worthy to be the first of the Myrrh-bearers to behold the Lord arisen from the dead, and when she fell at His feet, she heard Him say, "Touch Me not."

After the Lord's Ascension, nothing certain is known concerning her. Some accounts say that she went to Rome and later returned to Jerusalem, and from there proceeded to Ephesus, where she ended her life, preaching Christ. Although it is sometimes said that Saint Mary Magdalene was the "sinful woman" of the Gospel, this is nowhere stated in the tradition of the Church, in the sacred hymnology, or in the Holy Gospels themselves, which say only that our Lord cast seven demons out of her, not that she was a fallen woman.

Tradition relates that in Italy Mary Magdalene visited Emperor Tiberias and proclaimed to him Christ's Resurrection. She gave him a red egg as a symbol of the Resurrection, a symbol of new life with the words: "Christ is Risen!" Then she told the emperor that in his Province of Judea, the unjustly condemned Jesus the Galilean, a holy man, a miracle worker, powerful before God and all mankind, had been executed at the instigation of the Jewish High Priests, and the sentence confirmed by the procurator appointed by Tiberias, Pontius Pilate.

Thanks to Mary Magdalene the custom to give each other paschal eggs on the day of the Radiant Resurrection of Christ spread among Christians over all the world. On one ancient Greek manuscript, written on parchment, is a prayer read on the day of Holy Pascha for the blessing of eggs and cheese. In it is indicated that the abbot, in passing out the blessed eggs says to the brethren: "Thus have we received from the holy Fathers, who preserved this custom from the very time of the holy Apostles, therefore the holy Equal of the Apostles Mary Magdalene first showed believers the example of this joyful offering."¹

¹ www.antiochian.org