

## Entries for the women Disciples on Wikipedia and other Web sites

In looking for information on the female followers of Jesus, we were not really surprised by the lack of detail for most of them. The New Testament names several women followers that as we said were referred to as diakoneen (minister). The 3 synoptic Gospels all report the women who along with Mary Magdalene “watch from afar” at the crucifixion. Nonetheless, the Gospel of John and strong Christian tradition has Mary Magdalene at the foot of the cross. (See example of painting opposite.) Leaving the question of why the Gospels do not agree let us take a look at the other women mentioned in the Gospels. Apart from the women who “watch from afar” at the crucifixion are Mary of Bethany, Martha, Salome, Joanna, and Susanna. Again leaving the Bethany sisters until later, we will start our investigation of Joanna and Susanna.



Once again we will use the entries on Wikipedia as the entries encapsulate all that is known about the Saints. We will start with Saint Joanna. Wikipedia has:

**Joanna** was one of the women associated with the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, often considered to be one of the disciples. In the Bible, she is one of the women recorded in the Gospel of Luke as accompanying Jesus and the twelve: "Mary, called Magdalene, ... and Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources" (Luke 8:2-3).

Joanna is also among the women who went to prepare Jesus' body in Luke's account of the Resurrection, and who later told the apostles and other disciples about the empty tomb and words of the "two men in dazzling clothes".

Both Richard J. Bauckham and Ben Witherington III conclude that the disciple Joanna is the same woman as the Christian Junia mentioned by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (Romans 16:7).

She is honoured as a saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church on the "Sunday of the Myrrhbearers", which is two Sundays after Pascha (Easter), and in the Roman Catholic Church on May 24. She is commemorated in the Calendar of Saints of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod on August 3 together with Mary, the Mother of James and Salome.

Derivatives are: St. Jessica, St. Jennifer...

All that is said of Saint Susanna is that she is mentioned in Luke chapter 8. Nonetheless, both Susanna and Joanna were known as the Myrrhbearing women that went to the tomb with Mary Magdalene to prepare the body of Jesus. In respect to this Wikipedia has:

The **Myrrhbearing women** followed Jesus during his earthly ministry in Galilee, providing for him and his followers out of their own means (Mark 15:41). They remained faithful to him even during the most dangerous time of his arrest and execution, and not only stood by the cross, but accompanied him to his burial, noticing where the tomb was located. Because of the impending Sabbath, it was necessary for the burial preparations to be brief. Jewish custom at the time dictated that mourners return to the tomb every day for three days, and once the Sabbath had passed the women returned at the earliest possible moment, bringing myrrh to anoint the body. It is at this point that the Resurrection was revealed to them, and they were commissioned to go and tell the Apostles. They were, in effect, the apostles to the Apostles. For this reason, the Myrrh bearing women, especially Mary Magdalene, are sometimes referred to as "Equal to the Apostles."



Included in the Myrrhbearing women is Salome. Not to be mistaken for the daughter of Herodias that was given the head of Saint John the Baptist for her dancing. Moreover, there is an extensive article on the Saint in Wikipedia. Below we have excerpted the relevant passages for Salome as a Disciple of Jesus:

**Salome** (Hebrew, "*shalom*", "peace"), the younger sister of Mary (mother of Jesus), was a follower of Jesus, who appears briefly in the canonical gospels, and who appears in more detail in apocryphal writings. She was the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John, two of the Apostles of Jesus...

The Catholic Encyclopedia (1913) concludes that the Salome of Mark 15:40 is probably identical with the mother of the sons of Zebedee in Matthew; the latter is also mentioned in Matthew 20:20, in which she petitions Jesus to let her sons sit with him in Paradise.

...A common interpretation is to identify Salome as the sister of Jesus' mother, thus making her Jesus' aunt. "Mary the mother of James and Joses" mentioned in Matthew may be identified with Mary, the mother of Jesus, backed up by an earlier passage in Mark which names a James and a Joses (or Joseph) as being among Jesus' brothers...Salome is identified with Mary of Cleophas and venerated as "Saint Mary Salome". However, other traditional Catholic interpretations associate Mary of Cleophas with Mary the mother of James and Joses.

In the Gospel of Mark, Salome is among the women who went to Jesus' tomb to anoint his body with spices. They discovered that the stone had been rolled away, and a figure in white then told them that Jesus had risen, and asked them to tell Jesus' disciples that he would meet them in Galilee. In Matthew, just two women are mentioned in the same story: Mary Magdalene and the somewhat ambiguous "other Mary".

The canonical gospels never go so far as to label Salome a "disciple"...

The early Christian *Gospel of Thomas* found at Nag Hammadi mentions among the "disciples" of Jesus (the Greek expression "apostles" does not appear) two women, Salome and Mary Magdalene (referred to simply as "Mary").

The controversial *Secret Gospel of Mark*, that was referred to and quoted in the Mar Saba letter ascribed by some to Clement of Alexandria, contains a further mention of Salome which is not present in the canonical *Mark* at 10.46. Clement quotes the passage in his letter: "Then he came into Jericho. And the sister of the young man whom Jesus loved was there with his mother and Salome, but Jesus would not receive them." The lines complete a well-known lacuna in *Mark* as the text currently stands.

In the early but non-canonic *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* (early 2nd century), Salome appears again as a disciple of Jesus. She asks him how long death would hold sway, and he says to her, "So long as women bring forth, for I come to end the works of the female." To this Salome replies, "Then I have done well in not bringing forth." It would appear from this text that there was an early tradition that Salome the disciple was childless, and apparently unmarried.

In the *Gospel of Thomas* there is a reference to Jesus sharing Salome's couch at the meal, and of Salome's esoteric questioning. 'Who are you sir,' she asks him, 'that you have taken your place on my couch and eaten from my table?' And Jesus says, "I am he who is from the One, and the things that belong to the Father have been given to me." Salome replies, "But I am your disciple", and Jesus answers, "When the disciple is united he will be filled with light, but if he is divided he will be filled with darkness."

Even non-Christian writers in the 2nd century were aware that some tradition existed of secret teachings passed down from "Salome the disciple", to sects such as the Carpocratians, the followers of the Carpocrates who got hold of an unauthorized copy of the *Secret Gospel of Mark* in Alexandria mentioned in Clement's private letter and who claimed to derive some of their gnostic tenets from Salome, it would appear. A 2nd-century Greek, Celsus, wrote a *True Discourse* attacking the Christian sects as a threat to the Roman state. At the time he was writing, c. AD 178, the variety of Christian sects was still extremely broad. His treatise is lost, but quotes survive in the attack written somewhat later by Origen, *Contra Celsum* ("Against Celsus"): "While some of the Christians proclaim [that] they have the same god as do the Jews, others insist that there is another god higher than the creator-god and opposed to him. And some Christians teach that the Son came from this higher god. Still others admit of a third god - those, that is to say, who call themselves gnostics - and still others, though calling themselves Christians, want to live according to the laws of the Jews. I could also mention those who call themselves Simonians after Simon, and those naming themselves Helenians after Helen, his consort. There are Christian sects named after Marcellina, Harpocratian Christians who trace themselves to Salome, and some who follow Mariamne and others who follow Martha, and still others who call themselves Marcionites after their leader, Marcion."

An apocryphal Coptic Book of the Resurrection of Christ, attributed to the apostle Bartholomew, names the women who went to the tomb. Among them were: Mary Magdalene; Mary the mother of James, whom Jesus delivered out of the hand of Satan; Mary who ministered to him; Martha her sister; Joanna (perhaps also Susanna) who renounced the marriage bed; and "Salome who tempted him..."

She is commemorated in the Eastern Orthodox Church on the Sunday of the Myrrhbearers, i.e., the third Sunday of Pascha (Easter). She is remembered with Mary of Clopas on 24 April in the Roman Martyrology, and in the Calendar of Saints of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod on August 3 with Joanna and Mary.



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Like the male Disciples there is far from a clear consensus on the identification of the female Disciples of Jesus. Anyone who has given the New Testament the most cursory look cannot fail to see the number of women with the name Mary and the confusion over who is who. A perfect example is found in the entry for Mary of Cleophas:

**Mary of Clopas or Cleophas** (Greek: *Maria he tou Klopa*) the sister of Saint Joseph, was one of various Marys named in the New Testament...

The expression *Mary of Clopas* in the Greek text is ambiguous as to whether Mary was the daughter or wife of Clopas, but exegesis has commonly favoured the reading "wife of Clopas" (as reflected in above translation), though those holding that Saint Anne had three husbands see Clopas as one of Anne's husbands and father of Mary of Clopas.

She is identified with "Mary, the mother of James the Less and Joses" in Mark 15:40, and "Mary, the mother of James and Joseph" in Matthew 27:56, that are mentioned in exactly the same context, among the women present at the crucifixion...

Mary was also among the women that on Easter morning went to the tomb to Jesus' body with spices. Matthew 28:1 calls her "the other Mary" to distinguish her from Mary Magdalene, while Mark 16:1 uses the name "Mary of James", most probably derived from James the Less. The Latin version of that name, *Maria Jacobae*, is often used in tradition to distinguish her from the other Mary.

In John 19:25 Mary of Clopas appears immediately after the expression "His mother's sister". Therefore, Mary is therefore often seen as the sister of Jesus' mother, despite the awkwardness of having two sisters bearing the same name. However, other interpretations distinguish between two different persons, one being "His mother's sister" and the other being "Mary of Clopas". Still, other interpretations make Mary of Clopas not the sister but the cousin of Jesus' mother, as Hebrew or Aramaic had no specific word for cousin, or her sister-in-law, as Clopas was considered the brother of Joseph.

Some traditions, first visible in the writings of Papias, and later prevalent among Roman Catholics, have identified her sons James and Joses/Joseph with the "brothers of Jesus" of the same name and made her the mother of the "brethren of the Lord". This has led some modern writers, such as Robert Eisenman or James Tabor, to claim that Mary of Clopas actually refers to Jesus' mother as well, quite in conflict to the passage in John's Gospel that mentions both side by side.

In medieval legend the three Marys (Mary Jacobe herself, Mary Magdalene and Mary Salome) were adrift in a boat that miraculously arrived off the coast of Provence, now called Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. In that legend Mary Jacobe is the mistress of her Egyptian servant Sarah, venerated by Gypsies.

In the Roman Martyrology she is remembered with Saint Salome on April 24

There is one more Mary in the New Testament and this "Mary" has caused more confusion than all the other Mary's put together. The main confusion has been in associating Mary of Bethany with Mary Magdalene. Before we address this misidentification let us first examine what the entry for her says on Wikipedia:

In the *Gospel of John*, **Mary of Bethany** (Hebrew... **Miryām**, *Miryam* "Bitter"), the sister of Lazarus appears in connection with the visits of Jesus to Bethany and the death and rising from the dead of her brother Lazarus (John 11:20, John 11:31, John 11:33).

In Luke 10:38-42, Mary is contrasted with her sister Martha, who was "cumbered about many things" while Jesus was their guest, while Mary had chosen "the better part," that of listening to the master's discourse. According to the author of the *Gospel of Luke* she sat at Jesus' feet, but in the iconic tradition she is seen to anoint his feet (as per John 12:3), the role of the unidentified "sinner" in the house of Simon the Pharisee of Luke 7:36-50. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1910) states that " there is no suggestion of an identification of the three persons (the "sinner", Mary Magdalene, and Mary of Bethany), and if we had only St. Luke to guide us, and not John, we should certainly have no grounds for so identifying them." The Catholic authors go on to adduce the gloss to John 11:2, "Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus who was ill."



Thus, according to one interpretation, the Johannine tradition explicitly identifies Mary sister of Lazarus with the unidentified "sinner" in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Western tradition as early as the 3rd century ...further identified this "woman who was a sinner" not only as Mary the sister of Lazarus, but as Mary Magdalene.

Easton (1897) noted that it would appear from the circumstances that the family of Lazarus possessed a family vault (11:38) and that a large number of Jews from Jerusalem came to console them on the death of Lazarus (11:19), that this family at Bethany belonged to the wealthier class of the people.

On the occasion of Jesus' last visit to Bethany, an unidentified woman who brought "a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the head of Jesus" as he reclined at table in the house of one Simon, who had been a leper (Matt 26:6; Mark 14:3. In John 12:2-3, the woman who anoints the feet of Jesus is explicitly Mary, sister of Martha. Though there is no hint of the woman's name in Mark, or any reason given in the canonic gospels to connect her with Mary other than the circumstance of this anointing episode's happening in Bethany, in the Latin churches it has become the tradition of many Christians to identify the woman with Mary sister of Lazarus. The Greek churches distinguish Mary Magdalene, this Mary sister of Lazarus, and "the sinner" of Luke 7:36& Luke 7:50, and there is also no explicit support in the bible for such a theory, even though other groups claim this.

To Protestants, nothing more is known of her. In folk Catholicism, this Mary is also Saint Mary Magdalene, of whom both the Bible and legends apart from it tell more.

St. Mary of Bethany is commemorated in the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches as a saint on June 4<sup>th</sup> and on the Sunday of the Myrrhbearers (the Third Sunday of Pascha—i.e., the second Sunday after Easter). She also figures prominently in the commemorations on Lazarus Saturday (the day before Palm Sunday).

She is commemorated in the Calendar of Saints of the Lutheran Church, the Calendar of saints of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church on **July 29** with Martha and Lazarus.

So much for the younger sister of Saint Lazarus, what does tradition have to say about Mary's older sister Martha? The entry for Saint Martha on Wikipedia relates that According to the Catholic Encyclopedia:

*In the canonical Scripture, St Martha is mentioned only in Luke 10:38-42; and John 11, 12, sqq. The Aramaic form occurs in a Nabatean inscription found at Puteoli, and now in the Naples Museum; it is dated AD. (Corpus Inscr. Semit., 158); also in a Palmyrene inscription, where the Greek translation has the form Marthein, AD. 179.*

*Mary, Martha, and Lazarus are depicted by John as living at Bethany, but Luke would seem to imply that they were, at least at one time, living in Galilee; he does not mention the name of the town, but it may have been Magdala, and we should thus, supposing Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene to be the same person, understand the appellation "Magdalene." The words of John (11:1) seem to imply a change of residence for the family. It is possible, too, that Luke has displaced the incident referred to in Chapter 10. The likeness between the pictures of Martha presented by Luke and John is very remarkable. The familiar intercourse between the Saviour of the world and the humble family which Luke depicts is dwelt on by John when he tells us that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus" (11:5). Again the picture of Martha's anxiety (John 11:20-21, 39) accords with the picture of her who was "busy about much serving" (Luke 10:40); so also in John 12:2: "They made him a supper there: and Martha served." But St. John has given us a glimpse of the other and deeper side of her character when he depicts her growing faith in Christ's Divinity (11:20-27), a faith which was the occasion of the words: "I am the resurrection and the life." The Evangelist has beautifully indicated the change that came over Martha after that interview: "When she had said these things, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying: The Master is come, and calleth for thee."*



*Difficulties have been raised about the last supper at Bethania. John seems to put it six days before the Pasch, and, so some conclude, in the house of Martha; while the Synoptic account puts it two days before the Pasch, and in the house of Simon the Leper. We need not try to avoid this difficulty by asserting that there were two suppers; for John does not say that the supper took place six days before, but only that Christ arrived in Bethania six days before the Pasch; nor does he say that it was in the house of Martha. We are surely justified in arguing that, since Matthew and Mark place the scene in the house of Simon, St. John must be understood to say the same; it remains to be proved that Martha could not "serve" in Simon's house.*

According to Eastern Orthodox tradition, St Martha went to Cyprus with her siblings Mary and Lazarus, where Lazarus was appointed the first bishop of Kition. All three died in Cyprus.

According to one legend, St Martha left Judea after Jesus' death, around AD 48, and went to Provence with her sister Mary (potentially Mary Magdalene) and her brother Lazarus. Martha first settled in Avignon (now in France), then went to Tarascon, where a monster, the Tarasque, was a constant threat to the population. Martha managed to tame the monster and eventually died in Tarascon, where she was buried. Her tomb is located in the crypt of the local Collegiate Church.

She appears in the sacred gnostic text Pistis Sophia. She is instructed by the risen Christ on several of the repentances that must be made in order to have salvation. She also makes several prophetic interpretations of different Psalms.

Saint Martha is a Christian saint in the Eastern Orthodox churches, Roman Catholic Church, Lutheran Church, and the Anglican Communion. Her feast day is celebrated on June 4 in the Orthodox tradition and on July 29 in the Roman Catholic tradition. Her celebration, classified as a "Semi-Double" in the Tridentine Calendar, became a "Simple" in the General Roman Calendar of Pope Pius XII, a "Third-Class Feast" in the General Roman Calendar of 1962 and an obligatory "Memorial" in the Roman Catholic Calendar of Saints.

Among the Orthodox, she is commemorated collectively with the other Myrrh-bearing Women on the Sunday of the Myrrhbearers (the Third Sunday of Pascha—i.e., the second Sunday after Easter). She also figures in the commemorations of Lazarus Saturday (the day before Palm Sunday).

We will not get into Reasons for confusing Mary of Bethany here, because we want to address the general dismissal of the women Disciples. Over the past 2 thousand years many women have appealed to the Scriptures in support of women serving in the Church as ministers. We think that we will leave the last word on the subject for now to the web site women priests, as it lays out all the relevant details in such a way as it is difficult to dispute. Below are excerpts from a web site that we think best represents our discussion. [www.womenpriests.com](http://www.womenpriests.com)

Women as well as the apostles accompanied Jesus, going with him on the eventful journey from Galilee to Jerusalem...The road to Jerusalem, the death-point; was the way of suffering, and those who were with Jesus on this way were his followers. In the gospel of Mark where the term is used to describe a group temporarily following Jesus (*Mk 3:7, 5.24. 11:9*), the context indicates the actual relationship to Jesus.

The term 'to follow' connotes following Jesus as a disciple. In *Mk 15:40-41* the women who followed Jesus from Galilee would have a continuous relationship of discipleship and companionship to Jesus although neither in Mark nor in the other gospels is a woman explicitly described as a disciple of 'Jesus...

In the gospel of Mark women are first identified explicitly as followers of Jesus in the context of the crucifixion, yet at the same time their relationship with Jesus is described as serving him...

...The early Church verbalised a criteria for witness of Jesus: those who have accompanied Jesus during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us (*Acts 1:21-22*). Women fulfilled this requirement for they accompanied Jesus and his disciples on that decisive last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (*Mk 15:40-41*).

Jesus journeyed through towns and villages preaching and proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom of God. The apostles accompanied him and also some women, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and many others (*Lk 8:1-3*). There is no example of unfaithfulness of these women in the gospels...In spite of Jewish non-acceptance of women's witness all four evangelists have recorded Jesus' choice of women.

In various gospel stories women are seen to fulfill the requirements of a true disciple since discipleship is the primary relationship to Jesus—it is to learn from Jesus, observe his teaching into a life pattern and teach others.

Mary of Bethany joined herself as a disciple to Jesus. She sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching (*Lk 10:39*), in the attitude of a *Torah* scholar with a rabbi. She won approval from Jesus in the act of repudiating a woman's role (*Lk 10:40-42*) *Jn 12:3* describes her action of anointing the feet of Jesus with costly perfume and wiping them with her hair, representing her as a disciple of Jesus the teacher—a role generally forbidden to Jewish women. To wash the feet of one's master was an act of serving by a disciple. Jesus at the last supper performed for his disciples an act that normally would have been performed by a devoted disciple for his teacher. It is also the act which Jesus commanded his disciples to perform in imitation of himself (*Jn 13 :4-15*). Her act is connected by Jesus himself to his burial and his imminent departure (*Jn 12:7*).

Martha must be counted a disciple of the Lord for she proclaimed the primacy of faith since her confession of faith, 'Yes Lord! I believe that you are the Christ the son of God.' *Jn 11:20-27* is a response to the word of Jesus revealing himself as the resurrection and the life, a role analogous to

Peter as representative of apostolic faith. She also shared with Jesus his precious dialogue on the resurrection of the dead. Jesus challenges her with the word which must finally be accepted by anyone who wishes to belong to Jesus (11:25-26) that he is the resurrection and life.

The Samaritan Woman - This woman disciple presented within the life-time of Jesus, reflects the life of the Johannine Community. By speaking and learning from Jesus in a public place she broke the Jewish tradition (Jn 4:7). Jesus taught her the gift of inner life which led her to a state of conversion and declared him the *Messiah* (Jn 4:25-26), which is the content of Christian - faith . (20:31). She believed in him, leaving all things to hear effective apostolic witness to him among the Samaritans (4:28-29): she becomes a self appointed apostle blessed by the Lord. Many Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony (4:39). This woman apostle acted out of her belief in Jesus' self revelatory word and whose own witnessing word brought others to believe in him. Her apostleship is truly effective as indicated in *Jn:41-42*, according to which the Samaritans come to full faith in Jesus as Saviour of the world.

Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene...The western church liturgy celebrates Mary Magdalene as 'apostle to the apostles.' The commission that Jesus gives to Mary is 'go to my brothers, and say to them, I ascend to my Father, who is now your Father, to my God who is now your God'

(*Jn 20:17*). The message is addressed to Jesus' brothers and sisters whom Mary understands to mean 'the disciples' (20. 18). Thus she is, without any doubt the disciple whose place in the paschal mystery is most certainly attested by all four gospels. Her claim to apostleship is equal in every respect to both Peter and Paul's apostleship and we know more about her exercise of her vocation than we do about most of 'the members of the twelve. Unlike Peter she was not unfaithful to Jesus during the passion and unlike Paul she never persecuted Christ in his members, but like both she saw the risen Lord. received directly from him the commission to preach the gospel and carried out that commission faithfully and effectively (*Mt 28:8-10*).

Certainly women were sent on the most important mission of all. They were commissioned by Jesus 'to go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see me' (*Mt 28. 10*). The women remembered and conveyed his words (28:19). The origin of the announcement of the resurrection is linked to women since they were the first to find the tomb empty and to have the resurrection revealed (*Mt 28:5-7*). This resurrection tradition differs from that of *1 Cor 15:5-8* in which apparently only 'men' are cited as witnesses of Jesus' resurrection.

Mark publicly acknowledged that women had already belonged to the Jesus' movement in Galilee (*Mk 15:40-41*) and first mentions them in connection with the crucifixion. He establishes the authenticity of these traditions (16:1-8)...

Jesus gives no hint of a repudiation of women as unable to hear or understand or remember his word. He testified to the discipleship of his own mother when he complemented her role of physical motherhood by universalizing her relationship among those 'who hear the word of God and do it' (*Lk 8:21, Mk 3.31-35*).

We have seen that the women who appear in the gospels are mostly individual and original. They relate to Jesus directly without mediation, whose place is wherever Jesus calls them and whose role is whatever their love for him suggests. Their ministry to Jesus and to others in his name requires no approval of anyone. They are remarkable for their initiative and decisive action.

The most effective deterrent to women serving as ministers in the Christian Church has been the letters of Saint Paul. As stated, we will give you an extra two weeks to review the information about the female Disciples and the discrepancies in the information about 10 of the Apostles. In our next posting, we will discuss how Paul's words appear to disqualify women as serving in the Church in a ministerial capacity.