In Norway, Martha’s 17 October feast day is listed in the Niðaróss Missal(1519), which maintains that it should be celebrated with three readings and a sequence.[[1]](#footnote-1) The three readings for Martha’s 17 October feast day in the Niðaróss Breviary contain the story of her burial in Tarascon.[[2]](#footnote-2) The so-called *Manuale Norvegicum* or *Presta handbók* contains readings from several biblical passages that mention Martha, including the scene in John 11:21–27 where she acknowledges the resurrection of the dead and recognizes Jesus as the son of God, and the episode in Luke 10:38–42, where Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha.[[3]](#footnote-3) In the charters, Martha is named once, in a 30 May 1257 letter from Pope Alexander IV to Norwegian patriarchs, archbishops, and bishops, in which he instructs them to accept requests for forgiveness from men who had accused preachers and mendicants of laziness and attacked their right to preach and hear confession. In the context of this discussion, the pope refers to Martha’s ministry and service and contrasts it with Mary’s contemplation.[[4]](#footnote-4) There are no records of Norwegian churches that were dedicated to Martha or that contained her relics. Also, no examples of the use of Martha as a personal name exist in the Norwegian charters, nor does she appear in literature from medieval Norway.

Mary Magdalen’s feast day of 22 July appears with some frequency in texts from medieval Norway. Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Perg. 4o no. 28, a Norwegian law book written in the early fourteenth century, contains a calendar from the Premonstratensian Monastery of St Óláfr in Tønsberg, which lists the Feast of Mary Magdalen, along with incipits of the antiphon of the octave of Mary Magdalen.[[5]](#footnote-5) Her feast is also included in the calendar in Kristina Hákonardótter’spsalter(GkS 1606 4o [ca. 1230]) and in the calendars of various Norwegian law books from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, including Oslo, Universitetsbiblioteket, OUB 317 4o (ca. 1300) and Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Perg. 4o no. 30 (fourteenth century). The mid-fifteenth-century calendar for the Brigittine abbey of Munkeliv near Bergen also lists the saint’s feast day as 22 July.[[6]](#footnote-6) Instructions for the Magdalen’s feast are detailed in several legal works dating from the reign of Magnús Hákonarson lagabœtir (1263–80).[[7]](#footnote-7) The New Gulaþing Christian Law (1267) states that those who work on this feast day pay three *aurar* to the bishop.[[8]](#footnote-8) The New Borgarþing Christian Law (1268) lists “Mariu messo daghr Magdalene” among those feast days for which fasting is not necessary and indicates that working on it incurred a fee of three *aurar*.[[9]](#footnote-9) Finally, variant readings of Archbishop Jón rauði’s Ecclesiastical Code (1273) list Mary Magdalen’s feast day as one that requires fasting. If a person works on this day, he or she must pay one and a half *aurar* (rather than three) to the bishop.[[10]](#footnote-10)

The Niðaróss Ordinaryincludes an office for Mary Magdalen for 22 July. Lilli Gjerløw points out that this is the so-called English office, found in England in both secular and monastic form; in the case of Niðaróss, the secular form is used. The hymn for vespers, “Magno salutis gaudio,” which references Mary’s interaction with Jesus, is found with musical notation in fragments of a thirteenth-century antiphoner for Niðaróss Cathedral.[[11]](#footnote-11) The ordinaryalso has “Maria Magdalena” in two *responsoria* and one *versus* to a *responsorium*.[[12]](#footnote-12) The Magdalen’s office is included in the Niðaróss Breviary (1519), where her feast is graded a *semiduplex*.[[13]](#footnote-13) Moreover, in all but one manuscript preserving the *Manuale Norvegicum* (i.e., Thott 110 8o [ca. 1300]), she is first among those female saints whose names are invoked (aside from the Virgin Mary). The *Manuale* alsocontains instructions for the Feast of Mary Magdalen and readings from various biblical passages where the composite Mary Magdalen is mentioned, including Jesus’s visit to Mary and Martha’s home in the Gospel of Luke and the scene of the Crucifixion in the Gospel of John.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Mary Magdalen’s feast is mentioned regularly in Norwegian chartersfrom the beginning of the fourteenth century. The first occurrence appears in a document dated 22 July 1304, relating an order issued by King Hákon Magnússon for the people of Kampen.[[15]](#footnote-15) She is named in letters of indulgence starting in the early fourteenth century and continuing throughout the Middle Ages. The first such letter (of those preserved in the diplomas) was written by Archbishop Eilífr (d. 1332) in May or September of 1318 for Rein Convent and granted it the authority to distribute forty-day indulgences on select feast days, including that of Mary Magdalen.[[16]](#footnote-16) Her feast is also named in a letter of indulgence written on 9 October 1374, in which Archbishop Þróndr offers a forty-day indulgence to sinners who visit and give alms to the Church of St Laurence in Tønsberg on certain feast days.[[17]](#footnote-17) The only known recorded dedication to the Magdalen in Norway is an altar in Oslo Cathedral.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Mary Magdalen’s name – which was used in Norway from the fourteenth century in the form Magdalena – is found in several charters as a personal name.[[19]](#footnote-19) The earliest example dates from 17 October 1356, in a reference to a woman named "Magdhalena," who is said to be the wife of Arnaldr bakari (baker) of Oslo.[[20]](#footnote-20) The saint’s name also appears in a document written on 9 June 1405 regarding a property dispute in Oslo between two people, “Vidar Reidarson and Magdalena Johannesdatter,” who may be the same woman as in the 1356 charter.[[21]](#footnote-21) Another document, written on 4 October 1491 in Bergen, names one “ffru Magdalena Axels søsther.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Magdalena occurs quite regularly as a personal name in Norway after 1500.[[23]](#footnote-23)

The surviving artistic representations of the Magdalen in Norway date generally from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. She is portrayed both in paintings and sculptures, most often holding her jar of ointment, as on the altarpiece sculptures from the churches of Fosnes in Namdalen, Ringsaker in Hedmark, and Austevoll in Hordaland.[[24]](#footnote-24) On the shutter door at Røldal Church in Hordaland is a sixteenth-century painting of the Magdalen holding a book, with St Óláfr on the door opposite her. Her image is also painted on the left shutter door on an altarpiece in Norddal Church in Møre (ca. 1510–20), which depicts the Crucifixion.[[25]](#footnote-25) Sculptures of the Magdalen adorn the churches of Kinn in Sogn and Fjordane (ca. 1500–25), Sandøy in Troms (ca. 1500–25), Karlsøy in Troms (ca. 1520), and the altarpieces in the churches of Grong in North Trøndelag (ca. 1450–75) and Hillsøy in Troms (late fifteenth century).[[26]](#footnote-26) One of the more elaborate representations of the Magdalen from medieval Norway appears on the right shutter door of an altarpiece in Trondenes Church in Troms (ca. 1500). In this depiction, Mary Magdalen, adorned in fine clothing and with long, flowing hair, is opening her jar of ointment, which bears the inscription “SANTE MARIA.”[[27]](#footnote-27) Mary Magdalen also appears on textiles from medieval Norway. She is shown on a chasuble dated to the end of the fifteenth century from an unknown church, where she clings to the foot of the cross and is accompanied by Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and John.[[28]](#footnote-28) In Hof Church in Toten, the Magdalen’s name is inscribed on an altar border from the fifteenth century.[[29]](#footnote-29) In this instance, she stands alongside St Francis, which speaks to her importance for mendicant orders in Norway.[[30]](#footnote-30) In terms of literature, Mary Magdalen is mentioned once in the *Old Norwegian Homily Book* (AM 619 4o [ca. 1200]) – namely, in the homily entitled “In die sancto pasce sermo ad populum" (A sermon for the people on Holy Easter).[[31]](#footnote-31) She does not appear elsewhere in this work, even though she is mentioned in several homilies in the *Old Icelandic Homily Book* (Stock. Perg. 4o no. 15 [ca. 1200]), which shares eleven homilies with its Norwegian counterpart.[[32]](#footnote-32)

The Norwegian ballad “Maria Magdalena” (labelled NMB 46) is extant in eighteen complete transcriptions and some fragments, mostly from Telemark. All Norwegian transcriptions of the ballad are younger than the text on the early eighteenth-century Danish leaflet. In the Norwegian tradition, the woman is simply “Maria,” and in some variants Jesus is “ein gudfryktig mann” (a God-fearing man).[[33]](#footnote-33) In one variant, a transcription from Aaine Hansdotter Hinne from Grue in Solør, the refrain “Jesus deg hun fødde” (Jesus, she gave birth to you) is used, which implies a peculiar (and isolated) instance of amalgamation of the sinful Magdalen with the Virgin Mary.[[34]](#footnote-34) Some Norwegian versions of the ballad add further detail to the nature of her penance; one specifies that she should go into the wilderness without shoes.[[35]](#footnote-35) In another transcription, taken by Sophus Bugge from Hæge Bjørgulfsdotter Solli of Fyresdal, she was also to sit naked at the church wall for six years and then in a strong current stream for seven years.[[36]](#footnote-36) As in the Danish version, there is an association of the Magdalen with sinfulness and penance, and more specifically, with the *vita eremitica*.

1. Gjerløw, “Kalendarium I,” 103 and 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hans Bekker-Nielsen, “Marta fra Betania: Norge og Island” in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder*, <ed.?>(Copenhagen, 1966), 11: 471–72, at 472; Jean Kerbriant and Jean Bienayse, eds., *Breuiaria ad vsum rituq[ue] sacroscte Nidrosieñ. Ecclie* (Oslo, 1964), yy.iiij. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Helge Fæhn, ed., *Manuale Norvegicum (Presta handbók)* (Oslo, 1962), 42, 133–34. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *DN* 9: 47–50. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Lilli Gjerløw, ed., *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae* (Oslo, 1968), 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Isak Collijn, ed., “Kalendarium Munkalivense, ein schwedisch-norwegisches Birgittinerkalendarium,” in *Mittelalterliche Handschriften: Paläographische, Kunsthistorische, Literarische und Bibliotheksgeschichtliche Untersuchungen, Festgabe zum 60 Geburtstage von Hermann Degering*, ed. Alois Bömer and Joachim Kirchner (Leipzig, 1926), 82, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Gjerløw, “Kalendarium I,” 100; Magnus Rindal and Knut Berg, eds., *King Magnus Håkonsson’s Laws of Norway and Other Legal Texts: Gl. kgl. saml. 1154 fol. in the Royal Library, Copenhagen* (Oslo, 1983), 16–18. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Rudolph Keyser and P.A. Munch, eds., *Norges gamle love indtil 1387* (Oslo, 1848), 2: 316–17. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid., 298. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid., 358–59. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Lilli Gjerløw, ed., *Antiphonarium Nidrosiensis ecclesiae* (Oslo, 1979), 179–82, 231–32. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Gjerløw, *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae*, 239–40, 368. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Kerbriant and Bienayse, *Breuiaria ad vsum*, h.v., v–ij;Gjerløw, *Antiphonarium Nidrosiensis ecclesiae*, 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Fæhn, *Manuale Norvegicum*, 29, 133–34, 164, 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *DN* 5: 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *DN* 1: 136–37. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid., 324. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Edvard Bull, *Folk og kirke i middelalderen: Studier til Norges historie* (Oslo, 1912), 251. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Guðrún Kvaran, “Kristen indflydelse på islandske personnavne,” in *Kristendommens indflydelse på nordisk navngivning: Rapport fra NORNAs 28 symposium i Skøalholt 25–28 maj 2000*, ed. Svavar Sigmundsson (Uppsala, 2002), 9–19, at 15; Guðrún Kvaran and Sigurður Jónsson frá Arnarvatni, *Nöfn Íslendinga* (Reykjavík, 1991), 395; E.H. Lind, *Norsk-isländska dopnamn och fingerade namn från medeltiden* (Uppsala, 1905–15), 752. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *DN* 11: 46–47. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *DN* 4: 548–49; Lind, *Norsk-isländska dopnamn,* 752. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *DN* 6: 646. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Lind, *Norsk-isländska dopnamn*, 752. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Bull, *Folk og kirke*, 251; Eivind S. Engelstad, *Senmiddelalderens kunst i Norge, ca. 1400–1535* (Oslo, 1936), 187, plates 156 and 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Engelstad, *Senmiddelalderens kunst i Norge*, 187, 233, 249–50, plates 115 and 90<should be 190?>. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ibid., 187, 242–43, 266–67, 302–3, 309–11, plates 147, 173–74, 188–89, and 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid., 187, 297, plate 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Helen Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud: Middelalderske paramenter i Norge* (Oslo, 1941), 128–29. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid., 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Bull, *Folk og kirke*, 251. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Gustav Indrebø, ed., *Gamal norsk homiliebok: Cod. AM 619 4o* (Oslo, 1931), 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. David McDougall, “Homilies (West Norse),” in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (New York, 1993), 290–92, at 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Velle Espeland et al., eds., *Norske mellomalderballadar: Legendeballadar (TSB B-gruppa)* (Oslo, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Ibid.; Ann-Mari Häggman, *Magdalena på källebro: En studie i finlandssvensk vistradition med*

*utgångspunk i visan om Maria Magdalena* (Helsinki, 1992), 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ibid., 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Espeland et al., *Norske mellomalderballadar*. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)