

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACT:** MARGARET PERRY, Director of Alumni and Friends, Office of Advancement  
Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception  
at the Dominican House of Studies  
487 Michigan Ave, NE  
Washington DC 200017  
Phone: 202-495-3828  
Email: [advance@dhs.edu](mailto:advance@dhs.edu)

**WHEN:** Sunday, November 8, 2009;  
Mass at 11:15 am  
Public Veneration from 12:30 to 5:20 pm  
Rosary and Vespers at 5:20 and 5:40 pm

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Relics of St Mary Magdalene arrive in Washington D.C. on their first North American tour

**Washington, D. C., October 16, 2009**— A relic of Saint Mary Magdalene, often referred to as the Apostle of the Apostles, is making its first North American tour. The relic, a major piece of her tibia, will be carried in a reliquary to the United States by Father Romaric, a French Dominican priest. It will be at the Dominican House of Studies, 487 Michigan Ave, NE, on Sunday, Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Mass will be said at 11:15a.m., public veneration extends from 12:30p.m. to 5:20p.m., and the Rosary and Vespers will be said at 5:20p.m. and 5:40p.m. respectively. All events are open to the public.

The purpose of the tour, which continues through November 30th, and has already included visits to Louisiana, New York and Georgia, is to share the holiness of the relic and to tell the story of the saint who is recorded as the first witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Father Romaric is touring with the permission of Bishop Dominique Rey of Frejus-Toulon, France, the relic's home. A letter of authentication from Bishop Rey reports that the relics were hidden at the time of the Saracen invasions and rediscovered in 1279, and have been venerated without interruption ever since.

Richard Borgman, a former Protestant evangelical pastor who experienced a dramatic conversion to Catholicism seven years ago, initiated the tour. His interest in Mary Magdalene began when he and his wife, also a lay missionary, lived with Bishop Dominic Rey below the mountains of Saint Baume, the grotto where Mary Magdalene spent the last 30 years of her life. Saint Baume means holy perfume-- the smell that Mary Magdalene's bones gave off when they were found.

As for the authenticity of the relics, Borgman says, "The tradition of the Church is historically pretty close to being infallible in this area. King Louis XIV crawled on his knees up the mountains to venerate the relics of Mary Magdalene; and the princes of Europe and their ladies and the Queens made special pilgrimages to this grotto in the 1200s."

For centuries the relics were missing - disappearing from about 710 A.D. when the Saracens pillaged the South of France and the Church hid sacred objects to safeguard them. Then in 1279, they were discovered by Charles II of Anjou in a crypt of a chapel in the town of St. Maximin in a sarcophagus that did not have her name but that contained a piece of old parchment dated 710 A.D., that said, 'Here lies the body of Mary Magdalene.'

Upon discovering the bones, Charles II sealed the crypt and gathered all the Bishops for an official opening and inspection. All of the bones including the skull were found intact. The only missing bone was the lower jaw bone which was later found and identified by the Pope as the same jawbone that had been venerated, for centuries, as the jawbone of Mary Magdalene, at Saint John Lateran Church in Rome.

Two years ago, this relic traveled to the city of Fortaleza in Brazil. It was carried into a huge cathedral by four firemen. Richard Borgman was there and witnessed the event: "There were thousands of people who were screaming and cheering and laughing and crying and jumping in the air. This is the holiness of Mary Magdalene and this is why I wanted to bring the relic to the United States."

What does he hope to see happen as a result of this tour? "I think we will see a joining of the Catholic Church in the United States around the holiness of Mary Magdalene. She is still affecting people today; tens of thousands of people come to Saint Baume to venerate her bones."