

## **Patroness Selected for Women of Courage**

You may be aware that the patron saints of the EnCourage apostolate are Saint Monica and Saint Augustine, and the patron saints of the Courage apostolate are Saint Charles Lwanga and Companions. While the women of Courage love and venerate these saints, we were excited by the invitation to add a patroness of our own as we have regular meetings and retreats just for the women.

The conversation began in person at the Courage/Encourage conference in July. The floor was open for discussion and a joyful conversation began with women naming virtues we admire and challenges we share with each saint that was suggested. I was struck by the enthusiasm and affection that the group had for each female saint that was mentioned. The friendly debate gave us three top saints to vote on.

St. Joan of Arc seemed an obvious choice for her interior strength and determined faithfulness. St. Catherine of Sienna was named because she worked tirelessly, in the midst of Church upheaval, to return the Pope to Rome, and for her title of Doctor of the Church. However, after the conversation at the conference and consulting with the women's online community, St. Mary Magdalene was chosen as our patron. We love the fact that she was at the foot of the cross and the first person that Jesus appeared to after His resurrection. While we do not associate St. Mary Magdalene being healed of seven demons with same-sex attraction, we have all come to the Lord for His healing and mercy. Her especially close relationship with Jesus is what we wish to imitate.

Many of us have adopted a personal patron to help fight against the isolation that can challenge us as women of Courage. We will continue to delight and rely upon the great Communion of Saints; however, having one saint, St. Mary Magdalene, unifies us and strengthens us as sisters in Christ.