

# THE STATUE OF ST MARY MAGDALENE IN ST MARY MAGDALENE'S

*This Sunday we welcome the terminally ill sculptor of the statue, Michael Zaunbrecher, to St Mary Magdalenes's so that he can see and touch his statue before he dies (see front of newsletter). The article below appeared in the German newspaper, Aachener-Zeitung, on 8 July 2011, and has been kindly translated by St John's parishioner, Katrin Ottersbach.*

[https://www.aachener-zeitung.de/allgemeines/filigrane-figur-mit-grosser-symbolkraft\\_aid-26862187](https://www.aachener-zeitung.de/allgemeines/filigrane-figur-mit-grosser-symbolkraft_aid-26862187)

## **Filigree sculpture with great symbolic power**



The filigree sculpture at its destination: Hans Zaunbrecher (links) and Karl Schöbben (2<sup>nd</sup> from the left) brought the Mary Magdalene sculpture to Edinburgh, where they also met Keith Michael Patrick Cardinal O'Brien (right).

**Waldfeucht-Bocket/Edinburgh: Mary Magdalene does not smile. She gazes neither happy nor sad into the world. She seems to know that good fortune follows grief, that after pain, happiness will return. "That's life", says Hans Zaunbrecher.**

The wood sculptor from Bocket and his apprentice Karl Schöbben from Breberen have created this Mary Magdalene with her notable facial expression. 600 hours of hard work produced this 160cm tall wood sculpture.

*“Everything started in the monastery of Koningsbosch”,* recall the two artists. It was there that they erected the approximately 200kg block of lime wood, which they carved and filed until the filigree face together with the body of the companion of Jesus Christ emerged. *“First I drew a stencil of the figure and transferred it onto the woodblock.”* explains Hans Zaunbrecher. He then cut out the rough features with a chainsaw, before he and his apprentice started their work with carving knives. In doing so, the creators took care of every detail. Just to give the hands a life-like appearance, Birgit Evers from Horst had to sit as a model for hours. *“Also for the face I took inspiration from Birgit Evers”* admits Zaunbrecher.

The idea for the work, which was initially meant as a practice piece for Karl Schöbben, came from the apprentice himself. *“I could feel that it was meant to be Saint Mary Magdalene. It was a sort of inspiration.”* says the 48-year old, who considers himself to be a very religious person. The figure holds a great wooden cross in one hand and a cup in the other.

*“They symbolise the suffering and the blood of Christ”,* explains Schöbben. The skull at her feet symbolises death, while the book underneath stands for love and wisdom. To finish, the two artists worked a glittering Swarovski-crystal into the pendant of the necklace that the saint wears around her neck, which is meant to embody strength and radiance. The two of them are rightly proud of the fruit of their labour. Not only has the symbolic figure, which according to the two sculptors represents Jesus Christ, been a very appealing success, it has also since the end of May been standing in St. Mary’s Metropolitan Cathedral (built 1813) in Edinburgh, where it has already experienced a lot of appreciation. Zaunbrecher und Schöbben gifted their work to the Roman- Catholic church. They even brought it themselves by car and ferry to Scotland and erected the statue next to the altar of this magnificent church.

The two men are still very impressed by their experience in Edinburgh. *“The consecration was conducted during a 1 ½ hour mass with church choir and all due ceremony.”* enthuses Zaunbrecher. More than 1000 people attended the consecration, during which the two donors were of course asked up to the altar and introduced to the parish. *“The mass was entirely dedicated to Mary Magdalene”,* reports Hans Zaunbrecher. *“We were overwhelmed by the kindness of the people”,* adds Karl Schöbben. *A few days later, in another well-attended mass, they got to meet Keith Michael Patrick Cardinal O’Brien, who fascinated them because of his naturalness.*

The Scottish parish thanked the two sculptors from the west of Germany multiple times for their gift. The life-sized sculpture will now receive, as the only wooden figure, a special place in the church. *“We will definitely have to come back for the 200-year anniversary of St. Mary’s Metropolitan Cathedral”,* the two sculptors agree. By that time, Mary Magdalene will also certainly have found her final place and will continue to glance meaningfully into the world – neither happy, nor sad.