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## St. Magdalene Altarpiece

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Listed in the lower horizontal border of the St Magdalen Altarpiece, created in Germany by Lucas Moser in 1432, are the names of Saints Mary Magdalen, Anthony and Erhard, followed by the word, *ingulgentia*. This phrase implies that those making a pilgrimage to Tiefenbronn, the original and present location of the St. Magdalene Altarpiece, on the feast days of the saints listed, obtained and → indulgence. Although early scholars described the St Magdalen Altarpiece, similar to the basilica at → Vézelay, as the physical center of an established Magdalen cult, it is likely that its indulgence phrase referred to Tiefenbronn's specific indulgence privileges. In the late Gothic period altarpieces were but one medium used religious establishments to notify pilgrims of available indulgences at their location. This folding triptych-form work includes depictions of the story of the Magdalene based on the *Golden Legend* on the front, centered around the portrayal of the Magdalene washing the feet of Christ with her hair. The wings open to reveal Martha and Lazarus, her siblings in painted images that flank a sculpted Magdalen.

Several surviving examples of altarpieces bearing such inscriptions testify to this purpose. Such a use of altarpieces can be attributed to the increase in pilgrimage at a local level in the late Middle Ages. As the number of shrines multiplied, the promise of indulgence became an important way to attract visitors. Evidence that Tiefenbronn had such indulgence privileges were obtained in the period, but also in a documented account from 1445 by a group of soldiers who visited Tiefenbronn's church to obtain the indulgence. Related practices account for the format of the indulgence phrase of the St Magdalen Altarpiece, since letters of indulgence usually specified, along with general feasts, the local feasts on which indulgence could be received.

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