

4. 6.20

Today is Monday of Holy Week, and our Gospel today speaks of a party which Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus give for Jesus. Lazarus is reclining at table with Jesus and his friends.

Martha, as usual, is serving, and Mary, perhaps again as usual, has created an extraordinary task for herself. She has bought a liter of perfumed oil, made, we are told, from genuine aromatic nard. Now she pours this scented oil over Jesus' feet, and the house is filled with its fragrance. And she wipes his feet with her hair. Surely some of the guests must have been scandalized at her action. Her wiping his feet with her hair gives rise to thoughts of a sexual nature in them. They begin to wonder about her. Is she so innocent that she has not thought of the possibility that someone would misinterpret her action? But is such innocence possible in a mature woman? And if it is, what does it say about her supposed maturity? But Judas, one of the invited disciples, is clear about his own thoughts. For him her action is a "waste of money," money which could have gone to feed the poor. So he said to himself and perhaps to some of the others there, though later on these others would realize that he had been stealing from the contributions made to support Jesus and his followers. And now the party is interrupted by crowds of people at the door who have heard of

Lazarus' restoration to life and want to see him and Jesus. They recognize how extraordinary this restoration was and are beginning to entertain the thought of becoming followers of this Jesus.

We will move from this dinner party to another one on Thursday of this week, and then from there we will move into the Lord's passion and death. How true to ordinary life this rapid and huge transition from fun to failure is. We are up and we are down, and all within a week or sometimes within a day, sometimes within a matter of moments. Could Jesus, weighted with carrying his cross, have still caught at some moments the fragrance of the aromatic nard, now mixed with the smell of his own sweat and blood?

May our prayer on this Monday of Holy Week be this: Lord, help me to hold out in my own down moments, especially when I realize how small, how insignificant they are compared to what others suffer in our world today. Today people are starving. Today people suffer torture and imprisonment. Today people try to care for their children even when they cannot offer them a home and food. Today children are separated from their parents in the name of national sovereignty. Given such a world, let me be patient and still in my own moments of trial and depression, of sickness and loneliness. Amen.