

Reflection Monday of Holy Week 2024

As we begin Holy Week we are invited to reflect on the final days of Jesus. Many of the people Jesus encounters during this week were hostile to him. Yet, today's gospel, six days before the feast of Passover during which Jesus was crucified, he experienced great kindness. Not only is he the guest at the table of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, the family that he loves, but one of them, Mary, went to great expense to render him a very thoughtful and tender service. She anointed his feet with very expensive ointment and dried them with her hair. Later in the same week, Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. Mary, the sister of Lazarus, through her gesture of anointing Jesus' feet, anticipates the servant gesture of Jesus at the last supper. In her anointing Mary gives herself to Jesus in a way that corresponds to how Jesus would give himself to his disciples, and to all of us at the end of the week. We have been called to serve one another and those around us, especially those in need. Jesus uses the gesture of Mary as a preparation for his death and burial. He thus says to Mary that *'she had to keep some scent for the day of my burial'*.

We too can anoint people by our attentive and caring presence at a time when elements in their lives and the challenges they face, often not of their own making, are stacked against them. The Jesus of Holy Week, whom we know as the suffering Son of Man, comes to us in many guises, and it is Mary, rather than Judas, who shows us how to respond to his presence.