

Monday of Holy Week

Readings: Isaiah 42:1–9
Hebrews 9:11–15
Mary anoints Jesus;
John 12:1–11



Our current situation, with many of us isolated and separated (for good reason of course), completely overturns the social norm. The usual encouragement to get out of our homes, to seek company, share concerns and joys, to find interesting hobbies and pursuits, has been reversed. This is exactly what Mary does in today's gospel reading.

'Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.'



We can imagine the wonderful smells in Lazarus' home that day. Martha had served dinner, so the room must have been filled with the aromas of freshly baked bread, and roast lamb or goat, cooked over a smouldering fire. Then Mary approached and broke every social rule in the book, an instant of total scandal! The room filled with a scent so intense, so luxurious and gorgeous that it smothered all else. In a prophetic act of adoration, she anoints Christ and lets down her hair to wipe his feet with it.

Points for reflection

Most of us, if we're honest, react with horror and embarrassment at social impropriety. Judas – the man who will soon betray Jesus – is the one who objects.

Where are you, in this picture?

Who do you feel closest to; Mary? Judas? Martha, Mary's sister? Or one of the other guests?

What would you say, or do?

We know what events will follow and can place Mary's actions in context. Hunt your home for the most beautiful scent you can find (perfume or aftershave poured onto a cotton pad or tissue; a flower, maybe even food) and place it beside a picture of Christ, or a Bible. Take time to enjoy the scent in the presence of Christ, who loves you.

◆ Creator of all, Sustainer of all, Saviour of all, Your glory and majesty are beyond our understanding, Your power too awesome to behold. And yet your love enfolds us as a gentle breeze. Saviour of all, Sustainer of all, Creator of all, We bless your holy name. Amen.⁴

⁴ www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Praise.htm