

Monday of Holy Week

Gospel text (Jn 12,1-11): Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where he had raised Lazarus, the dead man, to life. Now they gave a dinner for him, and while Martha waited on them, Lazarus sat at the table with Jesus.

Then Mary took a pound of costly perfume made from genuine nard and anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair. And the whole house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. Judas, son of Simon Iscariot —the disciple who was to betray Jesus— remarked, «This perfume could have been sold for three hundred silver coins and turned over to the poor». Judas, indeed, had no concern for the poor; he was a thief and as he held the common purse, he used to help himself to the funds. But Jesus spoke up, «Leave her alone. Was she not keeping it for the day of my burial? The poor you always have with you, but you will not always have me».

Many Jews heard that Jesus was there and they came, not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests thought about killing Lazarus as well, for many of the Jews were drifting away because of him and believing in Jesus.

«Anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair»

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Today, the Gospel summarizes two attitudes about God: Jesus Christ and life, in

itself. Judas criticizes Mary for anointing Jesus' feet: «Judas, son of Simon Iscariot—the disciple who was to betray Jesus— remarked, ‘This perfume could have been sold for three hundred silver coins and turned over to the poor’» (Jn 12:4-5). What Judas said did not make sense, and it ties in with Jesus' doctrine. But it is much too easy to criticize what others may do, even when they had no hidden intentions, as it was the case with Judas.

Whatever our protest it must be an act of responsibility: with our protest we have to ask ourselves how would we do it instead, what are we willing to do, to do it better. Otherwise, our protest may just be—as it is actually the case here—the complaint, those who normally do it, wrongly use to make before those who try to do it the best they can.

Mary anoints Jesus' feet and she wipes them with her hair, because she truly believes this is what she must do. Her behavior can be qualified of splendid magnanimity: «Mary took a pound of costly perfume made from genuine nard» (Jn 12:3). It is an act of love, and like any act of love, difficult to understand by those who do not share it. I think that, as of that moment, Mary realized what, centuries later would write saint Augustine: «Maybe in this world the feet of our Lord are still in need. For, of whom, other than his members, said He: ‘Whatever you do unto the least of these, you do unto me. You spend that which you do not need, but you have done that which is good for my feet’».

Judas' complaint has no utility whatsoever, and it only led him to treachery. Mary's act led her to love her Lord even more and, as a consequence, to love more all the “feet” of Christ there are on this world.