

16. February 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“The resolution to kill Lazarus as well”

Jn 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Laz'arus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; Martha served, and Laz'arus was one of those at table with him. Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said, “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it. Jesus said, “Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.” When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came, not only on account of Jesus but also to see Laz'arus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Laz'arus also to death, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

Jesus returned once more to Bethany, where His friends prepared a supper for Him. It was His last station before entering Jerusalem, the culmination of His journey. It was then that the moving scene took place in which Mary anointed His feet with a very precious perfume and wiped them with her hair.

Here we find a gesture that expresses the being of a woman who loves and who pours all her tenderness into it. It is an overflowing love, a prodigal love, which finds this wonderful and perfect expression before the Lord and which goes hand in hand with the adoration that only God deserves. Nothing we can give Him is too much!

In stark contrast to Mary's gesture, we see the reaction of Judas, who did not understand this act of love because his heart was filled with other things. Instead of seeing in this woman's generous gesture the expression of a heart totally devoted to the Lord, he considered it a waste and would have preferred that the money should fall into the purse

he was in charge of and whose funds he appropriated. His concern for the poor who could have been helped with this money was only an appearance.

In the midst of this scene, Jesus utters the wonderful words: *“The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me”*.

It is not wrong for us to try to offer our best to God. If this generosity comes from a loving heart, then the gift offered is embellished by the expression of that love that we see in Mary today. Therefore, it is not inconsistent for us to build beautiful and rich temples for God and, at the same time, to keep our hearts open to the poor.

A crowd of Jews came to Bethany to see Jesus and Lazarus, who had risen from the dead. They had understood the sign that Jesus had performed and it became a bridge to believe in Him. Thus, the risen Lazarus became a witness who could not be contradicted. The news was spreading and it was foreseeable that many more Jews would believe in Jesus because of Lazarus, so that those who had closed their hearts to the Messiah saw him as a danger and a threat.

The wickedness, which had already struck deep into the hearts of those who considered themselves leaders in the correct practice of the Jewish religion, was on the increase. Now they even wanted to kill Lazarus, so that his existence would not stand in the way of their iniquitous plans.

It is alarming to see how evil - personified in the fallen angels - can take hold of people's hearts. Demons seek out men's weak points, which are often pride, disordered passions, lust for honour and recognition, ambition for power, among many others. The demons reinforce these evil inclinations, so that the person succumbs more and more to their influence.

This progressive darkening can be seen very well in the stubborn Pharisees and other religious leaders, who will later be responsible for the death of Jesus. As the Lord points out again and again, they were under the influence of the ‘father of lies’, the ‘murderer from the beginning’. That is why their wickedness increases more and more, to the point of wanting to put a person to death simply because his resurrection represents a threat to them. We have already considered how inconceivable is their purpose to kill the Son of God. It is frightening, as is their intention to kill Lazarus.

We will not be able to understand the many atrocities with which we are often confronted if we do not take into account the existence of fallen angels. When man, with his evil inclinations, falls under their influence, he is capable of unimaginable atrocities and wickedness.

That is why St. John's statement in his epistle is so important: "*The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil*" (1 Jn 3:8b). Whoever believes in Him will be delivered from these dark influences and will be able to walk his way into the light of God. The sign that Jesus worked in Lazarus, manifesting His authority over death, could have opened the eyes of the religious leaders. But for this it is necessary to be willing to accept His love and to see His works. The enemies of Jesus were no longer willing to do this.