



Holy Monday

A gesture of love for Jesus

"Mary brought in a pound of very costly ointment, pure nard, and with it anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair" (Jn 12:3).

What a tender gesture on Mary's part this Gospel passage tells us! It is a tenderness that corresponds to the being of a woman, and which reflects something of her beauty and her capacity for self-giving. Mary has given her whole heart to Jesus, and what a consolation that loving soul must have been for Him in the midst of so much hostility. Something similar will happen to Him on the Way of the Cross, when Veronica wipes His face.

"Then Judas Iscariot - one of His disciples, the man who was to betray Him - said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?'" (Jn 12:4-5)

What a contrast and antithesis: here the loving gesture of a woman; there, Judas already plotting within himself the betrayal of the Lord. Here the Jews who seek to see Jesus and Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead; there, the chief priests who want to kill the Lord and also Lazarus, *"since it was on his account that many of the Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus"* (Jn 12:11).

And Jesus?

He accepts Mary's love, just as He accepts every gesture of love that people give Him: He receives it and keeps it forever. In His heart, He will never forget this gesture. Even we, so much later, still think of Mary's love, because Jesus points her out to us as an example of how we can love Him:

"In truth I tell you, wherever in all the world this gospel is proclaimed, what she has done will be told as well, in remembrance of her" (Mt 26:13).

Here we see Mary's loving self-giving; there, the increasingly closed heart of Judas, who neither understands this gesture of love nor delights in it; rather, he rejects it, caught up in his ambition for money.

Jesus, knowing full well that Judas would betray Him, tries to make him, as well as all of us, understand that love for God comes first: *"Let her keep it for the day of my burial. You have the poor with you always, you will not always have me"* (Jn 12:7). Nothing must come before love for God; not even charity for the poor can replace the personal love for God.

The Lord asks for our love, so that He, in turn, can fill us with His own. *"I am thirsty!"* - Jesus will cry out from the Cross (Jn 19:28), longing for the response of our love, once He showed us His even unto death.

There are so many ways to show Jesus our love: Mary anointed His feet, Veronica wiped His face with a veil... But we, who do not have him physically in our midst, how can we show him our love?

Jesus is present in our midst in His word and in the Blessed Sacrament. He is waiting for us to take time for Him, to visit Him in the tabernacle and to receive His tender love there. In this way, we can show Him our love and be at His feet, like Mary. There we can anoint Him with the fragrance of our self-giving; and offer Him our heart, like Veronica's veil.

Love is creative! Just as our Father delights to show us His love in a thousand ever new ways, and day by day in so many ways He blesses us; so we can express our love to him in so many ways, consoling him also for the many people who do not yet know him or have forgotten him.

If we do not know which expression of love to opt for, let us ask the Holy Spirit, He who is the love between the Father and the Son. He will certainly answer us!