



DIOCESE OF ABERDEEN & ORKNEY

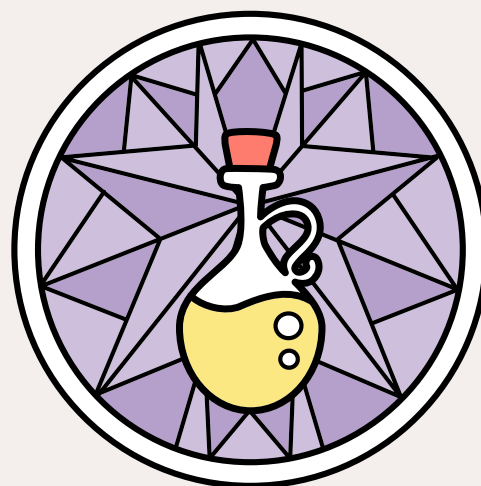
FROM ASHES TO FIRE: A JOURNEY FROM LENT TO PENTECOST

Monday 14th April 2025

John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. 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. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor 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 because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.



To Pray

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy, but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant, that we, walking in the way of his cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

To Reflect

We heard this section of the Gospel of John the Sunday before last - Passion Sunday at the start of Passiontide. We know here it in it's timeline.

We see Mary anointing Jesus with expensive perfume. This links to the myrrh offered to the infant Jesus by the Magi - linking the Nativity to Holy Week.

Mary is attentive to Jesus' teaching, part of Jesus' social circle (her brother is Lazarus who Jesus raised from the dead). It appears that of all those Mary might be the only one who understands who Jesus really is and what is about to happen.

There is dispute by those present about the best use of the expensive perfume, should it be used in an act of devotion or sold and the proceeds used for to benefit the poor? Different reasons for this attitude are explored in the different disciples, including Judas. What do you think was the best use for the perfume? How would you have reacted if you were present?



To Listen

(these can be found at <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1rWKLwqgJD1kTr2pPwAUrP?si=87ae72af060e4b65>)

- *Drop, Drop Slow Tears* by Orlando Gibbons. This is a setting of a poem by Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650) linked to the Gospel for today, the first two lines are “*Drop, drop, slow tears, and bathe those beauteous feet, which brought from heaven the news and Prince of Peace.*”
- *J.S.Bach's St Matthew Passion* has three movements that reflect on Jesus' anointing with precious ointment: *St Matthew Passion BWV244: Pt 1. 4 Da versammleten sich die Hohenpriester, 5 Du lieber Heiland du* and *6, Buß und Reu*
- A hymn relevant to today's readings is *Hail to the Lord's Anointed* by James Montgomery.
- *Mary's Song (When Pouring the Oil on Jesus)* by Ben Potter (from the Album ‘*The Glory of Your Presence*’).

Mary of Bethany realizes there is no point in saving burial perfumes by Carolyn Mackie

This is the smell of burial—
 the sweet aromatic telling you all hope is gone
 when you would give anything for just a little more time
But my brother is here now
 eating dinner with Jesus
 laughing
So I will take the perfume I bought for Jesus' burial
 and pour it on him now—
 the smell of resurrection

Carolyn Mackie © 2023 via <https://womenintheology.org/2023/04/03/poem-for-monday-of-holy-week/>

The Coming by RS Thomas (1913-2000)

And God held in his hand
A small globe. Look, he said.
The son looked. Far off,
As through water, he saw
A scorched land of fierce
Colour. The light burned
There; crusted buildings
Cast their shadows: a bright
Serpent, a river
Uncoiled itself, radiant
With slime.

On a bare
Hill a bare tree saddened
The sky. Many people
Held out their thin arms
To it, as though waiting
For a vanished April
To return to its crossed
Boughs. The son watched
Them. Let me go there, he said.

R S Thomas: Collected Poems 1945-1990 (Phoenix, 2000)



Mary anointing Christ's feet, Illuminated Leaf 15v from the Vaux Passional, c. 1503-4, Painting and ink on vellum © National Library of Wales

From christian.art

In our illumination we see Mary approaching Jesus' feet. A small dog (symbolic for fidelity) is back crawling away from Judas who is seen standing holding a bag of coins. Note also the peacock in the borders. In Christian art, the peacock symbolises eternal life and resurrection, as it was believed in antiquity that its flesh did not decay.