

As we enter into Holy Week, Jesus is 2 miles outside of the Holy City of Jerusalem in anticipation of the Passover. Lazarus had died and been brought back to life by Jesus on the 4th day. It is a happy gathering of friends when Jesus comes again to dine with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus in Bethany.

With an eye to the Triduum, let us explore the similarities between this celebratory meal and the Passion of Jesus:

- Mary anoints the feet of Jesus in Bethany. The oil is costly, and Mary is most generous in anointing the feet of Jesus this way. “The scent of the perfumed oil, which fills the whole house, signifies Mary’s overflowing generosity in this gesture for Jesus.”ⁱ
 - We see a similar act of generosity when Jesus offers his life as a fragrant and sacrificial gift to the Father on the cross. After his death, In Jerusalem, Nicodemus will bring the fragrant oils for the burial of Jesus.
- Mary dries the feet of Jesus with her hair.
 - At the Last Supper, Jesus will wash the feet of the apostles and dry them with the towel around his waist. Jesus does this to offer a model for the apostle’s for how they are to serve others in humility.
 - Although Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, will not be at the Last Supper she has already learned this lesson well. All the more to recognize her wisdom in sitting at the feet of Jesus to learn from him when Martha was busy tending to the preparations for a previous dinner (Lk 10:38-42).
- Judas objects to Mary’s generous and loving act for as the gospel tells us, he was a thief stealing from the common money bag of the apostles.
 - In Jerusalem, Judas will leave the last supper to accept 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus.
- Jesus defends Mary saying, “Leave her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial” (Jn 12:7)
 - Jesus is fully aware of those who are plotting against him. Jesus’ response reflects an understanding that it is an act of great mercy to bury the dead. “Those who favored proper burial of the dead thought it an essential condition for sharing in the resurrection” (Note to Jn 12:7).

Jesus enjoys his time with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. On the following day, he will enter Jerusalem and the crowds will go out to meet him carrying palm branches and crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (12:13).

We are aware that the death of Jesus is imminent. Many people came to believe Jesus is the messiah with the raising of Lazarus. For non-believers like the high priest Caiaphas, it is the straw that breaks the camel’s back. He and others in the Sanhedrin have decided Jesus must go. They seem to have no conscience and no moral qualms whatsoever in arranging the death of Jesus. What a stark contrast we see between believers and non-believers.

Let us model the unconditional love of Mary and her guest Jesus. As we try to do good, many may try to tear us down or destroy the good work we set out to do. We need to look beyond the naysayers to our relationship with God and seek to serve him with a generous and loving heart in all we do.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ Martin, Francis; Wright, William M. IV. *The Gospel of John (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture)* p. 218.

ⁱⁱ Mother Teresa Prayer – Do it Any Way