

It just pours out

John 12.1-8

Jesus visits his friends – Mary, Martha and Lazarus – at Bethany. Mary anoints him with expensive perfume and Judas disapproves due to the waste of money. Jesus affirms Mary for her love and kindness.

Now read **John 12.1-8** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

Mary makes an extravagant gesture of gratitude – possibly for Jesus' raising of Lazarus. John makes clear that Judas' plea for the poor is insincere, and Jesus affirms the importance of making gracious acts of love and thanksgiving.



How does this painting make you feel?
What makes you glad to be alive?

Hands-on Lent



In this week's Gospel story, Mary poured perfumed oil on Jesus' feet as a sign of thanksgiving. Add something scented, perhaps a small amount of perfume, to your Hands-on Lent bowl as a reminder of how powerful saying 'thank you' can be. You don't have to anoint each other's feet on Easter Day (though, you could!), but perhaps the perfume will remind you to find a way to express your thanks to each other – and to God.

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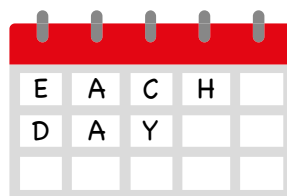
Make a list of your favourite smells. Without naming them, get someone to guess what they are, e.g. for a rose, you could mime picking a flower and smelling it, or for freshly-brewed coffee, you could mime sipping from a cup. Why are some smells so special? What do they evoke?

PULSE POINTS

Make some fragrant oil, either by using olive oil and essential oil or simply by using fragrant herbs such as rosemary. Anoint your wrists – or in a group, each other's – with the words: 'May I/you be filled with the beauty of holiness.'



Herbs have their own language. For example, parsley represents gratitude, basil: love, rosemary: remembrance, thyme: courage, sage: wisdom, mint: virtue and oregano: joy. Use the herbs you have available as a prayer aid: spend time reflecting on the themes they represent.



Each time you use something that is fragranced (soap, shower gel, shampoo, washing-up liquid) think about its fragrance and put aside a coin. At the end of the week, give the money you have accrued to a charity that helps the poor, e.g. Christian Aid. See if you can persuade others in your household to do the same.



Make your own scented candles.

You will need: new wicks, which can be purchased at good craft stores or online. Collect old half-burnt candles and heatproof containers, such as jam jars. Carefully melt the wax in a saucepan. Measure the wick length so that it touches the bottom of each holder and stays straight. Tie the wick string around the middle of a pencil/skewer and balance it horizontally on top of the jam jar so that the wick is centred. Carefully pour the melted wax into the jam jar. Add essential oils as desired while the wax is molten. Place the filled candle holders onto a flat surface to cool.

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

The night before he arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus stopped at Bethany. Lazarus, whom he had recently raised from the dead, and his sisters Mary and Martha, lived here. To welcome Jesus, they held a special dinner. Lazarus and other guests were sitting at the table, eating with Jesus. Martha was busy serving food and drinks to everyone. Suddenly, in came Mary with a jar of very expensive sweet-smelling oil. To everyone's astonishment, she took the oil and poured it gently over Jesus' feet. Then she let her hair down and wiped Jesus' feet with it. The whole house was filled with the sweet smell of the perfume.

Judas, one of Jesus' disciples who would later turn against him, was at the table and saw what happened. He said angrily to Mary, 'Why did you do that with such expensive oil? Why did you not sell it and give the money to the poor instead? That oil was worth a year's wages! It should have been sold.' (Now it may seem that Judas cared about the poor, but it was the money he really



cared about. He was a thief. He kept the group's money purse and would often steal from it.)

Jesus did not agree with Judas. 'Leave her alone,' he replied. 'Mary bought this oil for me, for the day of my burial. She was right to use it. The poor will always be here with you, but I will not.'

John 12.1-8

Did you know?

- Mary might have been thankful because Jesus raised her brother (Lazarus) from the dead.

- Jesus wasn't saying that we shouldn't help the poor, but he knew Judas didn't care about the poor and might keep the money for himself. Jesus was defending Mary's act of thankfulness.

John 12.1-8 (NRSV)

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."