

Reflection

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Is 42:1-7 John 12:1-11

This Monday morning in a week called HOLY the Gospel invites us into a dinner/a special dinner/not a last supper but a meal given for Jesus and his disciples by his friends . . . a meal that in some ways presages the final meal and demonstrates the many types of relationships that Jesus has with his followers.

Relationships of comfort with Lazarus who reclines at table. . . demonstrating the ease of being with Jesus, Martha who does what seems natural to her in offering service and relationships with Mary and Judas. . . who seem almost opposites of each other.

We see Mary creating a space of profound intimacy with Jesus, anointing Jesus' feet with very precious oil. . . oil whose fragrance fills the house. . . when I imagine this scene...I picture her rubbing Jesus' feet and lower legs with this soothing oil and then the scripture says she dried them with her hair. . . such intimacy. . . such loving touch. . .

In her book on John. . . ***Written That You Might Believe***, Sandra Schneiders says this scene with Jesus and Mary shows a woman acting on her own initiative/not seeking the permission of the male figures to take action/and when a male objects Jesus silences him, not letting the women's ministry be controlled by a male disciple. Reminding us of all the women who have come after Mary like Cabrini and Maxis who have had to contend with male dominance.

When I read this Gospel passage, I find myself wondering. . . (putting on my 21st century psychological hat) if Judas is afraid of the intimacy that he is seeing between Jesus and Mary. . . which is why he switches the topic to money. While we make much of Judas' betrayal and well, we should, I think what often gets lost is the contrast in the basic mentality of these two disciples. Mary who comes out of a stance of abundance. . . a liter of precious oil is a lot. . . she is a lover. . . and Judas who comes out of an

attitude of scarcity. . . which, perhaps, explains why he is stealing from the common purse.

The words of Isaiah today are similar to the words Jesus applied to himself at the beginning of his public ministry and I would like to suggest, words that apply to us as IHMs, as we approach Chapter.

These scriptures today seem to assure us that we have been formed for justice and we will not be abandoned. And they invite us into an intimacy with each other . . . disciples invited to a dinner . . . invited to take on service and intimacy. . . to be women who are not afraid to be what might look like to others as over the top. . . to act as Mary. . . in sharing what is precious to us with outrageous generosity. . . and perhaps learn from the Mother Cabrini film, that so many of us have seen recently believe in the providence of a generous God who will provide benefactors and partners if we initiate a ministry.

To spur us on I would like to close with a poem from the 14th century Persian poet, Hafiz...a poem that was sent to me at profession from one of our own great lovers, Jan Soleau.

Spill the Oil Lamp

Spill the oil lamp!

Set this dry boring place on fire!

If you have ever

Made wanton love with God,

Then you have ignited that brilliant Light inside

That every person needs.

So_____

Spill the oil!

Spill the oil lamp.