



At the heart of the Gospel, we find moments that, though they occurred over two thousand years ago, resonate with a power and relevance that speak to us today. One such moment is the anointing of Jesus in Bethany, an act filled with symbolism, love, and prophecy that invites us to reflect on our own relationship with God and with others. This episode, narrated in the Gospel of John (12:1-11), is not merely a historical scene but a living lesson in spirituality, generosity, and faith.

The Historical and Spiritual Context of the Anointing

To fully grasp the importance of Jesus' anointing, it is necessary to situate ourselves in the context of the time. In Jewish tradition, anointing with oil was an act laden with meaning. Kings, priests, and prophets were anointed as a sign of consecration and divine election. The term "Messiah" literally means "anointed one." Therefore, when Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anoints Jesus with costly perfume, she is not performing a simple act of courtesy but a deeply theological gesture.

The Gospel of John places us in Bethany, six days before Passover. Jesus is at the home of Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. Mary takes a pound of pure nard, an extremely expensive perfume, and anoints Jesus' feet, wiping them with her hair. This act, which might seem excessive or even extravagant, is in reality a profound expression of love and recognition of Jesus' identity.

The Deep Meaning of the Perfume

The pure nard perfume was no ordinary substance. It was a luxury item, reserved for special occasions. Its value was equivalent to a year's wages, giving us an idea of the magnitude of Mary's sacrifice. Judas Iscariot, who would later betray Jesus, criticizes this gesture, arguing that the perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor. However, Jesus defends Mary, saying, "Leave her alone; she has kept this for the day of my burial. For the poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me" (John 12:7-8).

In these words, Jesus reveals the prophetic meaning of the anointing. Mary, moved by the Holy Spirit, is anticipating Jesus' death and burial. Her gesture is a preparation for the supreme sacrifice that Jesus is about to make on the cross. It is an act of love that transcends time, uniting the present and the future in a single moment of grace.

The Anointing as an Act of Surrender and Adoration

Mary does not merely anoint Jesus; she does so in a way that breaks social conventions.



Instead of anointing His head, as would be done for a king, she anoints His feet, a gesture that in Jewish culture was a sign of humility and service. Moreover, she wipes His feet with her hair, an act of intimacy and total surrender. This gesture reminds us that true love does not calculate, does not measure, does not hold back. It is a love that gives completely, without expecting anything in return.

In our world today, where individualism and consumerism seem to dominate, Mary's gesture challenges us to live radically differently. It invites us to ask ourselves: What are we willing to give out of love for Christ? How can we manifest our love for God in our daily actions? The anointing of Jesus teaches us that true worship is not limited to words or rituals but is expressed in concrete acts of love and surrender.

The Anointing and Our Spiritual Life

The anointing of Jesus is not just an event of the past; it has profound significance for our spiritual life today. In the sacrament of Baptism, every Christian is anointed with the holy chrism, becoming an "anointed one" of the Lord, another Christ. This anointing marks us as members of His body, the Church, and calls us to live in coherence with this identity.

Furthermore, in the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, we receive the grace of Christ to strengthen us in times of illness and weakness. This sacrament reminds us that, like Mary, we are called to prepare ourselves for the definitive encounter with the Lord, trusting in His mercy and love.

An Anecdote That Illuminates the Meaning of the Anointing

An ancient Christian tradition tells that, years after Jesus' resurrection, Mary of Bethany continued to live a life of prayer and service. It is said that, in her final days, she repeated the gesture of the anointing, this time not with perfume but with her tears, offering her life as an act of love and adoration to Christ. This anecdote, though not recorded in Scripture, reminds us that love for Jesus is not an isolated moment but an attitude that must permeate our entire existence.

Conclusion: The Anointing That Invites Us to Surrender

The anointing of Jesus in Bethany is much more than a historical episode. It is a call to live our discipleship of Christ radically, to love without measure, to give without calculating. In a world that often invites us to hold back, to accumulate, to reserve, Mary's gesture challenges us to be generous, to lavish love, to live in a constant attitude of surrender.



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May this story inspire us to look at our own lives and ask ourselves: What perfume are we willing to pour at the feet of Jesus? How can we manifest our love for God in our daily actions? May Mary of Bethany guide us on this path of love and surrender, so that, like her, we may anticipate in our lives the glory of the resurrection.

“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” (John 12:3). May our love for Christ be like that perfume, permeating all that we do and reaching to the ends of the earth. Amen.