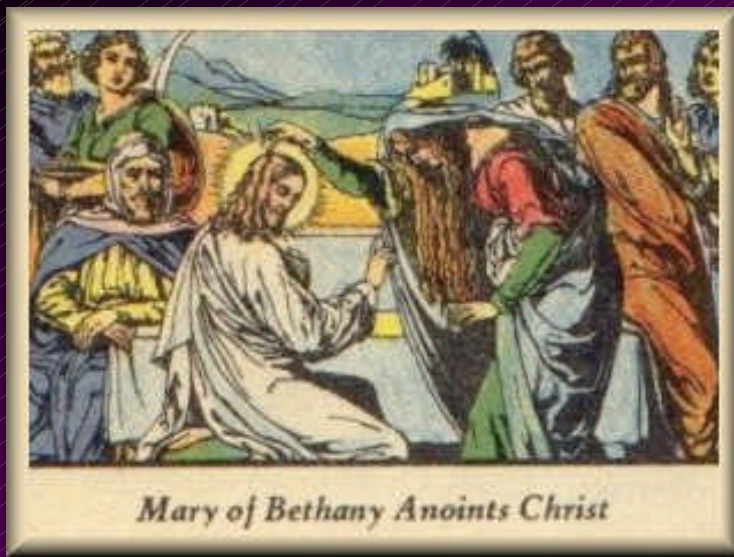


# Fifth Sunday in Lent Year C - RCL

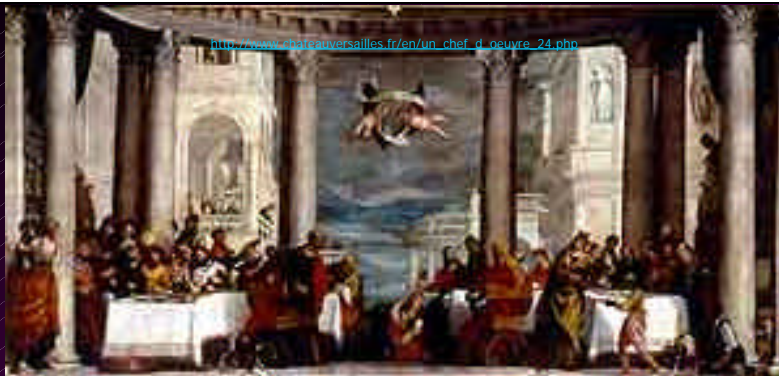
Skaneateles, New York  
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## Anointing at Bethany

<http://pages.ivillage.com/iyohi/108.html>



### John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 2 There they gave a dinner for him.

Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him.

Lazarus had been raised in John, chapter 11. Martha served... of course! (Though the Mary/Martha story is only told in Luke 10.38-42.) In John, Martha only appears in chapter 11 and this final reference here.

Why bother to identify Martha? Even more, we were told the dinner was in Lazarus' home, so why mention him? Are they being identified in order to be scolded?

Note the parallels in Matthew 6-13; Mark 14.3-9 and Luke 7.36-49.

		Matthew Luke	Mark	John
WHERE	Bethany		Bethany Bethany	
HOUSE	Simon's	Lazarus'	Simon's	Pharisee's
WHO		woman sinful woman Mary	... Simon woman	
CRITICAL	disciples Pharisee=Simon		of city some Judas Iscariot	
WHY		waste: money Jesus should	waste: money waste: money	



<http://getty.losangeles.museum/art/collections/objects/02144492.htm> |

<sup>3</sup> 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.

In John, is this Mary the same as the Mary Magdalene mentioned in 19.52 and 20.1-18? Probably not.

<sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said,

<sup>5</sup> "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?"

<sup>6</sup> (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.)



<http://www.pitts.emory.edu/woodcuts/1540Osla/00000790.jpg>

Only in John is Judas' secret reason identified.

300 denarii would be about a year's salary for the average working person.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said,  
"Leave her alone. She  
bought it so that she might  
keep it for the day of my  
burial. <sup>8</sup> You always have  
the poor with you, but you  
do not always have me."



<http://www.sthedwigchurch.org/tour/stainedglass/30e.htm>

The formulation of Jesus' statement is a bit odd. More literally, it reads, "Leave her be, in order that she might keep it for the day of my burial." How could she keep it if she just used it? [The NRSV is struggling to make sense of the text by adding, "she bought it."]

Matthew and Mark are clearer that it is an anointing of Jesus' body beforehand for its burial.

Only in Mark 16.1 is the word for anoint used again to speak of anointing Jesus' body. According to John 19.38-42, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepare Jesus' body using 100 pounds of spices!

One possible suggestion I offer is that Mary is to "keep" [*tereo*] the matter of the anointing much in the same way as is expressed in Luke 2.19 where Jesus' mother "treasures" [*suntereo*] all these things and ponders them. In this way, Mary's act is indeed held up as a prefiguring of Jesus' death and burial.

## Comments

- The lectionary doubtless is reading this anointing in John in light of Mark and Matthew and seeing it as a prefiguring of Jesus burial

## Comments

- What do you do with the matter of the "poor"?
- Perhaps the issue here is of choosing between two good things. How does one make such a decision?

It's tempting to read in the story of Mary/Martha in Luke 10.38-42 where Martha chose wrongly because one always has a chance to serve (a good thing, not a bad thing), but Mary chose rightly because they wouldn't always have the chance to listen to Jesus.