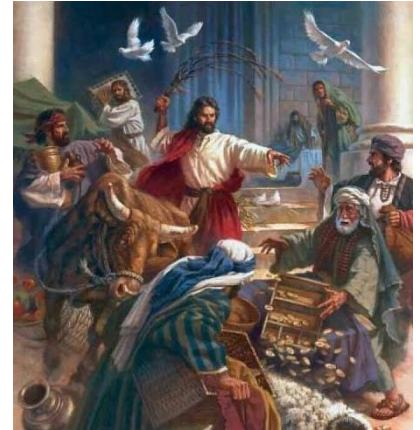


Reflections for Holy Week

Holy Monday

Read: Mark 11:15-19 Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."



And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

Reflect:

Inside the Temple, there were several different courts. The outer court, the first one, was for non-Jews who wanted to worship the true God of Israel even though they were not Jewish. When Jesus and his disciples arrived in the Temple, they should have seen a joyous place full of people at prayer.

Instead, the scene was quite different. One of the main activities of the Temple was the sacrifice of animals, and the animals had to be without blemish to be worthy of sacrifice. So as not to risk the animals they brought being rejected, the people would buy their sacrifice in Jerusalem. Because they were for a sacred purpose, they had to be paid for in the sacred coin of the Jews, not Roman currency thus the need for money changers who of course wanted to make a good profit.

Now there was nothing wrong with the sale of animals and the changing of money. But, to get a cut of the profits too, the Temple authorities had allowed this to happen right inside the Temple, in the place where people of all nations gathered to pray.

Jesus was angry: 'My house should be a house of prayer for all the nations. You have made it a den of thieves,' he said, as he threw all the traders and money-changers out. He did not want this place to be used for exploitation and corrupt dealings

Jesus was angry because of his love for the Father. He didn't care that his actions could get Him in trouble with the religious leaders. Sometimes the only right response is to be angry. Anger is what fuels reform. Jesus' example is one we should follow whenever we are faced with situations in which we have a chance to stand up for what is right in the face of opposition.

Pray for the for awareness and perspective to recognize unfairness and inequalities in the world and for strength, and courage to challenge injustice in all its forms.

Holy Tuesday

Read: Mark 14: 3-9 The Anointing at Bethany

While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."



Reflect:

The woman breaks the vial, and the perfumed ointment pours out. This act of breaking and pouring anticipates Jesus's own act of breaking bread and pouring wine the following evening. That which is whole is broken, that which is full is poured out.

The woman “wastes” a whole jar of perfume, says Jesus, because she foresees his death.

This is a preparation for burial. This is a powerless act — she cannot save Jesus from death —but this excessive act is beautiful.

Such a compassionate act deserves to be remembered. An act of anointing, which acknowledges the distinctiveness of Jesus as the Messiah, God’s chosen one, the One who is the Suffering Servant.

The woman steps in, breaking the conventions of the day, to show she understands what is about to happen, to signify to others that they need to be attentive to the situation. Jesus welcomes the care shown to him and his body. This gift was a comfort to him, a precious moment as the dark storm clouds began to gather.

This woman’s actions personify the gospel, as she reflects the love of God for Jesus and foretells that which will see him broken and poured out. Surely that is what should be considered the waste.

In this time of pandemic, it is humbling to think of this unnamed woman, who is an example of life in the kingdom. I find myself thinking of all those in nurses, doctors, hospital chaplains and others who have been present with those who have died. They like this woman, have performing beautiful costly acts. They have offered themselves in service to the sick and the dying. They have poured themselves out in love to support, reassure, and sustain their patients and the families of those they have cared for.

Pray:

For all home carers and medical professionals, especially for those who have sat or will sit beside the sick and the dying.

Holy Wednesday

Read: Mark 14: 10-11 Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

Reflect:

I find Judas an intriguing figure. How could a disciple who had walked closely with Jesus for three years, suddenly turn away from the love shown to him, and betray Jesus into the hands of the enemies?

But of course, betrayal is something only someone close to you is able to do. To betray, one must first gain trust of another. An enemy can attack you.... a rival may cheat on you..... but betrayal is a serious act committed by someone one who has promised support. When someone rejects us it wounds us, but betrayal pours salt on that wound to make it sting. Failure may cause us to fall but betrayal kicks us while we are down. Insults may hurt our pride, but betrayal breaks hearts.



Do you think Judas understood his own heart? Well, I think he felt sincerely close to Jesus, but, as time went on, things began to bother him. Rather than speak out Judas let his concerns fester until they rejected Jesus completely.

Judas betrayed Jesus but we should remember that Peter also betrayed him when he denied knowing him. The difference lies in the way they respond to their acts. Peter turned back to Jesus in repentance while Judas did not. We betray Jesus in every day, and like Judas and Peter, we have a choice. We can turn away and reject Jesus like Judas or we can turn to Jesus and seek His mercy and forgiveness – like Peter.

This mid- point in Holy week is a good day to look inward and to examine our intentions. It's a time to remember that God loves us even when we betray him, to acknowledge our sin and to embrace his mercy.

Pray the Lord's Prayer:

Let each phrase sink into your heart and mind. Pay particular attention to the phrase "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."