

*Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. <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. <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.) <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." John 12:1-8 NRSV*

Some years ago on trip to Cedar Point Amusement Park in Sandusky, Ohio, I was pleasantly surprised to see the college age help who were working there for the summer really take their job seriously. I especially appreciated those who ran the rides for the small children. Even though most of those rides went around in big circle, you'd swear it was the most fantastic ride there ever was for those small children. They were genuine in their excitement for the kids, not phony, and it made a wonderfully enjoyable experience for the kids. I really think you can really tell when something is phony or real.

In the gospel lesson above you have that contrast between "real" and "phony". Mary has done something very costly out of love and appreciation for Jesus, more than likely because he has raised her brother from the dead. It is a total appreciation from the heart as she wipes the perfume on his feet with her "let down" hair (A Jewish taboo for women when in public.) It is as if she pays no attention to anyone staring at her. At this point Judas pipes in that this expensive oil should have been sold and given to the poor. Sounds very "spiritual" ,doesn't it? John tells us though that there was really no "spiritual" motive to Judas words since he liked to help himself to the money given to Jesus and the disciples by others. Jesus however praises Mary's act of kindness. So many times we wonder about how we as Christians look to others, or how we should witness our faith. I think there is no better way than to show by your actions that you a sincere follower of Jesus. When I think of different things that encouraged me and remained with me over the years, it was those folk whose faith exuded sincerity about their faith in Jesus. The way they presented themselves meant everything. It was like the old saying from St. Francis of Assisi, "preach the gospel, use words if necessary" May such folk be such an example to our lives, that people can see the sincerity of our faith. You may be surprised how you much that example may mean to them.

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