

Homily for Monday of Holy Week

It is a little ironic that in these days of lockdown and isolation that we hear the story of a dinner party, when those days seem very remote.

Save the best until last, an expression that I would suggest, has been used by most if not all of us, whether it be food on a plate, leaving crackling to the last and so it goes on. "How much?" is another expression. Both of these can apply to those surrounding Mary. The perfume, very expensive as mentioned by John. This perfume is to be utilised for burial purposes.

Jesus' friend Lazarus and his sisters give a dinner, Martha doing the serving and Mary, perhaps the charismatic, had her own ideas.

Things get a little fraught with Judas stating that this was a waste of money, better to give the equivalent to the poor. Jesus says that the poor will always be with us. Unlike Jesus who won't.

I think it fair to say, there can be arguments or disagreements when organising "a do" and this is what happened here.

It could have been the most expensive bottle of wine, but it wasn't. It was very expensive perfume. Theologians say that it adds a little eroticism to the party, and causes offence. But it is given with love. Sometimes I think better for the living than the dead! But it brought fragrance to the room which otherwise might have been a little smelly, bearing in mind the location.

Rudyard Kipling wrote "Smells are surer than sounds or sights, to make your heart strings crack"

In real terms Mary is praying with her heart and her body and more than willing to "hang the expense" and whilst all this is happening Martha continues to serve.

It may be considered wasteful, Jesus gave his life and death is a waste, but he gave it to save sinners. Not a waste.

Like the world today, Jesus wants us to be together and united as the world conspires against him.

One day we will be back to some form of normality and have dinner parties:

I leave you with a question "Are you a Martha or a Mary?"

Fr Michael Taylor