



July 2024

“She has done a beautiful thing to me”

Mark 14:6



Reflection:

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Standing outside the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, I was despondent and wondered if this pilgrimage was even worth it. Our family had travelled more than a thousand miles to reach there and made it to the last Mass of the day. My heart felt as far away from the Lord as our seat was from the altar. Although we responded to the Lord’s voice to come on this pilgrimage, despite the cost and struggles of making a pilgrimage with our four children aged nine to one, I longed for some miraculous interventions of the Lord in my soul. On the contrary, there were arguments, complaints and interrupted Masses. But amidst all the gloom, there were also tiny whispers of affirmation, blessings, and the tender consolations of our Lady. Those whispers reassured me that our presence here brought joy to the Lord and his mother, and made the challenges disappear like the morning dew. I was reminded that even if everything didn’t make sense now, it was worth the cost, for love of Him.

We may sometimes wonder what the Lord feels about our choices or the sacrifices we offer to please and show him our love. An incident in the gospel of Mark a few days before Jesus’ passion and death may give us an insight into this question. A woman breaks open a jar of expensive perfumed oil and pours it over Jesus’ head in the house of Simon the Leper. The indignant onlookers point out that the cost of this oil was more than a year’s wages. Jesus reprimands them, appreciates the woman’s actions and declares, “She has done a beautiful thing to me”. When we consider the cost of the oil, their indignation may make sense to us. Yet, Jesus’ response was full of praise for what she had done.

How is it that even if some actions don’t feel or seem logical, they can still be good, valid and necessary? The logic of love is the only logic with which these actions can be measured. The woman’s gesture fills Jesus’ heart with gratitude. He is aware of the cost the woman had to pay for this act of love. She may have been sinful, but what Jesus sees is the kindness and love behind this costly gesture. A child who plucks a flower from their mother’s prized garden may irritate her, but her heart melts when she sees the earnest love with which her child presents the flower. Does not this give us hope? Even in our unworthiness, our sacrificial love can gladden the heart of Jesus. He scolds the onlookers for their inability to see what he sees, an act of pure love on the part of the woman.

We often limit ourselves and God to what we perceive through our natural faculties. However, as Christians, we are invited to see our actions and those of others through the eyes of a loving God. Like a lover who anticipates her beloved’s needs even before it is articulated, the woman responds in love by pouring out her heart along with the expensive oil. She never thought that she would be the only person who would have the privilege of preparing Jesus’ body for burial. Didn’t her costly sacrifice find resonance in the heart of Jesus who was about to make the supreme sacrifice for humanity?

As students, workers or parents, and in our ministries, the Lord invites us to bring joy to His heart! In our relationship with the Lord, we start by loving in the way we like just as in all human relationships. But as our love matures and is cleansed of all self-love, we long to love the Lord for His sake, to please His heart. As Jesus Youth, let us mature in our love by loving what God loves over our preferences. We may not have an alabaster jar to break open, but we all have an alabaster heart which needs to be torn open from all other attachments that compete with our love for Jesus. Can we unashamedly pour it out on Jesus? The world around us may not understand this life of supreme love, but the reaffirming words of Jesus will bring strength to our hearts, “You have done a beautiful thing to me.”

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