

# Sunday Homily

## 5th SUNDAY OF LENT

3 APRIL 2022

YEAR C

“You always have the poor with you,  
but you do not always have me.” John 12:8

### Illustration

It's the stuff children's fairy tales are made of – seeing transformation. Look at “Beauty and the Beast”, where a beautiful, kind girl unknowingly transforms the life of a prince who was turned into an ugly monster for his earlier unkindness. Or “Cinderella”, where the poor, pretty orphan girl is treated like a slave by her stepmother, and transformed into a princess when a prince falls in love with her. Or even “Sleeping Beauty”, who is awakened from her hundred-year sleep by a courageous prince.

The stories are all about knowing specialness and beauty, recognising reality, seeing the potential. They appeal to our hope for transformation, the promise of new life, and to our idea of ordinary people living out this vision. They encourage us to imagine life differently, to look for life in mundane or hard surroundings, and to reach out for life-giving transformations.

### Gospel Teaching

Today's readings set out a vision for us to live within – the vision of our triune God's dream for creation and our part in it all. Forgetting what lies behind us – all the successes and failures, deserts and valleys, journeys and crises, who we are and where we happen to find ourselves – Paul urges us to fix our eyes on the vision God has prepared for us, salvation in Christ and life in God's kingdom. This vision was the secret of Paul's life for Christ, of all that he did, was and would be for Christ. It was also the vision that captured Mary, the woman who had listened deeply to Christ, who had recognised the profound value and timing of his presence, and loved him extravagantly with passionate service and devotion. Mary offered herself sacrificially as Christ's disciple.

What a contrast to Judas! Here was a man who had spent many hours and days, even years, in the presence of Jesus, heard his teaching on the kingdom of God, seen his miracles at first hand, been part of his chosen team of companions. But Judas had not even begun to see and understand. He had not begun to recognise presence, power and love in this man Jesus, God's Messiah. Judas pretended only to see the conflicts and needs of “now”, refusing who Jesus was, and who he would be. The vision of God's dream – the prophecies, Jesus' life and words, the new life of God's kingdom – had not touched him. True, most of the

disciples needed the evidence of the death and resurrection of Jesus to begin to understand, and the coming of the Holy Spirit to begin to know God's life. But Judas' heart was so untouched that he could even plan to betray this innocent man for a handful of silver. The one who complained at Mary's extravagance chose to gain from the jealousy, hatred and legalism which led to Jesus' death, the death for which he had accepted Mary's loving anointing.

## Application

Mary and Judas present us with contrasting responses to Christ. It is not so very different for us all today either. There is still God's call to know him, and still so many of us miss the point, and need to be reminded. Christ's call to live within the kingdom, to see that which has come and is yet to come, to recognise Christ in our neighbours, in creation and in ourselves, and to live and work for the growth and glory of that kingdom and its king – all this is a work of God throughout the life of a Christian, and needing our open hearts, minds and eyes.

Mary shows us openness – letting love mould us and train us to live with our eyes wide open to the divine activity around us, and to be full of faith in our involvement. It is to see that to walk with the needy, lift up the weak, feed the poor, speak gently and love fully is God's call on all of our lives. It is to recognise that we need renewed hearts and minds to know the radical vision of Christ and experience the power of the promise of God.

Judas shows us the truth of living with a divided and loveless heart. We need first to be transformed for us to have a part in transforming the world. A vision of the kingdom of God brings together the call of personal salvation with political and social transformation; recognising the presence of Christ is to see both his lordship and friendship; knowing the promise and glory of God is the Spirit's work in us.