

Diocesan Fellowship of Evangelists

Easter 2010

John Ch 12v1 -11

V3The Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair.



Being a follower, a disciple, a learner of Jesus, for they all mean the same thing, is an exciting and passionate affair. You see you never really know where God might take you next, what encounters he might allow across your path or what pieces you read in the bible that might suddenly jump out at you and make you think again about an action you might be about to take. What does turn the other cheek really mean? Or what about if some one ask for your *tunic* give him your *coat* also - and what does it really feel like to be poor in spirit to enter the kingdom of Heaven?

You never really know what challenges God might allow to cross your path to see if you really do *trust the Lord with all your heart and with all your mind and with all your strength and understanding.*

And you never really know when all this personal religion, saying your own prayers, reading your own bible, living out your own life, is suddenly called to be a public affair. Those situations when you are given the opportunity to stand up and be counted as a follower of Jesus Christ, to be the one to say '*that is not right*' at work knowing that it will probably cost you your job, or to protest against immorality or world wide injustice for a people group. Have you taken your eyes off Zimbabwe or Afghanistan or Burma recently?

You just never know when God calls you.



Similarly you never really know when he is going to give you unbelievable joy or glorious celebration, like at the wedding at Cana when 180 galleons of best quality wine are poured out for a crowd who never asked for such generosity, never expected it and probably had not given God much of a look in at the feast. You simply never know.

And it's the same with sacrifice – all Christians know that we are called to take up our cross and follow. To be in some way in the ministry of sacrificial love as we see on the cross. It is a core of our calling as baptised members of Christ's body. And I guess every parent knows what a certain level of sacrifice food, money or time looks like.

But this gospel reading takes us into another realm - this woman named here as Mary, as in Mary of Martha and Mary fame, makes a huge sacrificial act and more than that does it in public.

It's an important story as it appears in one form or another in all four gospels – this makes it for us a significant moment, important enough for all four witnesses to record -

like a light shown onto an act that is significant for us, for the woman and for Jesus and for history itself.

It is almost time for Passover, and people are going to Jerusalem to prepare for the feast by undergoing ritual purification.



I want to invite you to think of that, going for ritual purification, following an ancient rite, a religious ceremony – and here in this home Jesus is purified by perfume.

The very act itself was sacrificial.

Martha helps with the serving (v. 2), true to the picture of her elsewhere (Lk 10:38-42). The picture of Mary is also true to that in Luke (10:38-42); that is, she is a devoted disciple who ignores the taboos of her society in her commitment to Jesus sitting at his feet as a disciple (Lk 10:39), this was not the place for a woman culturally.

Simply being where Jesus calls you to be can be an act of sacrifice. Some of us struggle where God has placed us. To stay with extravagant humility is an act of sacrifice.

The gift itself was sacrificial.

Mary now acts in an even more scandalous manner in anointing Jesus' feet with extremely expensive perfume and then wiping them with her hair (Jn 12:3). Both aspects of her action--the extravagance and the method--were disturbing. The *pure nard* she uses was imported from northern India.

Judas says, no doubt correctly, that it was *worth a year's wages* (v. 5). The text literally reads "three hundred denarii" (cf. NIV note). Since a denarius was a day's pay for a day labourer, the NIV paraphrase is accurate, taking into account feast days and Sabbaths when one would not work. No wonder the disciples (Mt 26:8), Judas in particular, respond with dismay at such a waste.

Sometimes there is, and will be, a financial cost that God calls us to pay in order to follow his call. The illogical financial sacrifice is very costly but gloriously liberating.

Remember the rich young ruler? 'Go sell all you have and then follow me.'

The act was also sacrificial in that it gave up on the security of accepted tradition, the norms of society - the wiping of his feet with her hair. Jewish women did not let down their hair in public. This is an expression of devotion that would have come across as extremely improper, and even somewhat erotic, as indeed it would in most cultures. There is no indication of why Mary did this act. The most obvious possibility was her sheer gratitude for what Jesus had done for her brother and the revelation it brought to her of Jesus' identity, power, authority and grace. For what would you let your hair down so that Jesus might be better known?



Easter Love. Jean

Department news



What a lovely start to this year we have had in the department – no not the snow, but the wonderful response to the *mission shaped intro* course that Ross and some of you have been running across and number of deaneries. Hundreds of people have so far attended and there are more deaneries coming on line. You can find the dates and venues by looking at the Diocesan website. This has meant that we have had lots of really good conversations and opportunities to talk about mission. In the autumn we are hoping to follow this up by running the one year (eight evenings, two Saturdays and a residential weekend) *mission shaped ministry* course in two venues across the diocese. This is particularly for small groups of people who are either already engaged in a Fresh Expression of church or are looking to try and set one up. At this time we are working hard to try and get finance in place so that it will be within the reach of most people. Please pray about that aspect. If there is just a few people at your church who would benefit from doing this course then do not hesitate to email me so you can go on the list as soon as the information is ready to come out.



The training of Evangelists

Currently we are exploring vocation with three candidates and I would ask that you pray for another three to join them by the start of June. Please continue to look around your church and see if God points anyone out to you and then give them a nudge – in love of course!

Continuing Ministerial Education (CME)

Each year we try and respond to the training needs identified in your annual report forms. To those who have returned the forms, well done! To those of you who meant to get round to it but.....just get to it after Easter.

This year we are hoping to run training on setting up a Fresh Expression of Church, the preaching module for those wishing to preach at outreach events and to explore together a missional idea called A Passion for Life. Please look out for details of these events coming your way and take up at least one opportunity in this year when we do not have a residential conference.

BacktoChurchSunday



Again we are offering free training evenings around the Diocese. It is very important that someone from your church comes to one of these so we can explain the new ordering service and so you can see one of your number who seems to star in a national DVD!

Back To Church Sunday 2010 is on 26 September 2010

'Come with me'

Do you realise that Back To Church Sunday is the largest global invitational event and it can happen at a venue near to you?

Back To Church Sunday has made it – Armstrong and Miller, who are well known comedians, featured it on their TV programme late last year! When that kind of thing happens – then it has to be good! If you want to view the video it is on the Back To Church website.

Making it happen in Rochester Diocese

I know that most of you participating will have been to the trainings in previous years but this year, we aim to make them different and as before, these are **FREE**.

This year apart from telling you about the importance of the 'welcome and invitation' we are going to provide you with some ideas for post Back to Church Sunday such as 'Coming Home for Christmas', 'Creating a Culture of Welcome' and 'Everybody Welcome'.

The training dates and venues are as follows -

21 April at St Augustine, Bromley Common; 4 May at St Philip, Tunbridge Wells and 5 May at St Justus, Rochester. All 7.30pm for 7.45pm start - (Mrs B2CS Veronica Rees)