

✠ Matthew 26:6-13 ✠

### **In Nomine Iesu**

Beloved in the Lord, you gather here today to think on the poor of this world and to see how they might be cared for and relieved of their many pains and sorrows. You have a daunting task before you for our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that we will always have the poor with us. Those who suffer for lack of money, food, clothing, houses, family, and whatever else that subsists us in this world will always be among us.

The poor were on the minds of the disciples as they sat with Jesus in Simeon the Leper's house. It was a house, no doubt bereft of fine furnishings and expensive tableware. Simeon, having been a leper, had also been a beggar, and so was poor. To show that they cared for such people, the disciples of Jesus became indignant at this woman when she used her valuable and expensive ointment in such a wasteful way. How could she use such expensive ointment in such a way right in front of those who could have benefited from the money it would have brought had it been sold instead? Perhaps it would have even benefited their host, Simeon the Leper.

But Jesus rebukes His disciples' thoughts and words. Why? Did Jesus not want the poor to be cared for? Of course He did. Did He not say that God Himself looks after His creation, even carrying for the fallen sparrow, so much more after those who were created in His image? Was Jesus selfish? Certainly not, for the Son of God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but took the form of a slave, humbling Himself, being obedient to the will of God even to death on the cross.

Jesus rebuked His disciples because they elevated the poor above the Master. Why did the Son of Man come? To feed the poor and house the homeless? No. The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. He came to give His life as a ransom for the many. That is why the Son of Man came.

When we elevate our work, no matter how holy and righteous it may appear to be, above the Master, then we deny the glory of God in the Son of God. This woman prepared Jesus' body for burial while He was still alive. Because the purpose of His being alive was so that He should die.

Jesus rebukes any who would say that being a Christian is primarily about loving our neighbor and doing works of mercy and charity. In truth, Christianity is not a religion but a state of being. The religion that flows from such a relationship, as St. James writes, is caring for the widows and orphans, the destitute and the homeless. Right religion flows out of being in the right relationship with God our Father.

Don't misunderstand me, caring for the poor is important, it is a blessed work that needs to be done and done well. But like any work we do – being a husband, being a wife, obeying our parents, doing our jobs well – it is only blessed if by it we honor the Son of God, loving our neighbor because of His great love for us in that He gave His life for us. Caring for the poor is not *the* important thing we do. *The* important thing we do is doing what this woman of blessed

memory did: worshiping Jesus by believing His words that by His death He takes away our sins and by His resurrection we are declared righteous.

Then the ointment of our faith will pour over His pierced feet and He will say of us: "This is a beautiful thing, for you have believed My words."

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

✠ Amen ✠