

The Gospel reading for Lent 5 records Mary anointing the feet of Jesus and then wiping our Lord’s feet with her hair.

**Holy Oils:**

Traditionally, holy oils were blessed and consecrated at special service known as a Chrism Mass/Eucharist on Maundy Thursday (the day before Good Friday.) As well as oils being blessed, clergy renewed their ordination vows before their Bishop. However, due to our geographic diversity here in Australia, this service is often held at other times in Holy Week to allow for travel, or at Synod when the Church/Diocesan family gather in one place.

There are three oils. The first two oils are purely olive oil. The third oil has balsam stirred into olive oil, giving off a wonderful fragrance.

The first oil is for the anointing of the sick. In the Prayer Book for Australia commencing on page 683, there is a service for the Anointing of the Sick and the Laying on of Hands. The service opens with words from the book of James, “Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord”.

The second oil is the Oil of the Catechumenate. In the life of the early Church, Catechumens (those seeking Baptism at Easter) were anointed with the oil of the Cathechumenate on the First Sunday of Lent. This is when the catechumen commenced an intense six week of preparation before baptism. Today the practice is to anoint people who are going to be baptised, whether young or old, as they begin preparation for their baptism.

It has been said that the oil of the Catechumenate is the “forgotten oil” today. Sadly, this is so, but I am one who seeks its rightful place in the life of the Church.

The third oil, is the oil of chrism. As mentioned earlier, it has the balsam stirred into the olive oil. This oil is used when churches are consecrated and when people are ordained as well as on other special occasions.

**Motives:**

Why do we do certain things at certain times?

The Gospel reading highlights several motives. Let us reflect on them, then look at our own life and what motivates us.

Mary took a sizeable quantity of a quality perfume. We know this because the fragrance filled the whole house.

God richly blesses us with abundance in so many ways as the fragrance filled the house.

Do we give thanks to God for the abundance we enjoy?

Do we cheerfully share the abundance we enjoy?

Is Christ at the centre of our lives as we explore our motives?

**The Body of Christ and Serving Others:**

In this Gospel reading, Judas raises the issue of how we care for the poor. Often the church appointed one person to look after the poor and those in need. However, some time ago I realised that it is the responsibility of the whole Body of the Christ. We are all created in the image of God. We all have different gifts, skills and talents. However, we are to work together using our different skills and talents to care for those in need.

Richard Gillard (b.1953) wrote

“Brother, sister let me serve you

let me be as Christ to you

pray that I have the grace

to let you be my servant too.”

You are invited to spend time saying or singing this verse to yourself and then asking yourself:

How do we seek to serve others?

Do I involve ourselves in intense listening or do I rush in with the answer?

Do I seek to hear their questions?

What does it mean to be Christ to another?

What does grace mean to you as we reach out to the poor and needy?

We live in day and age where the focus is on the individual. When we minister to another, whether as an individual or as group, do we expect, or do we allow others to minister to us as well?

If several people have undertaken this reflection process, they could come together and see how their Church, their community of faith, could improve the ways they reach out to others in the name of Christ.