

5. Concretizing love: fifth station

«... anointed the feet of Jesus and she
dried them with her hair"
Jn. 12,3.

The biblical scene presents a gesture that has no parallel in the Bible, except that of Lk 7:36-50³². We will try to decode in this stage the meaning of Mary's relationship with Jesus. Mary symbolically represents humanity's search for its Savior, the relationship of the Beloved with the Bridegroom, who is the King, the Anointed One, the Christ. In the Humanity of Christ is the Divinity. By her loving relationship with Him she is sanctified, transformed. Christ, through His Incarnation and Resurrection, makes every human being the temple of God in Him. So love of the Holy One, God, and love of neighbor come together inseparably in the Humanity of Christ. We clearly place ourselves in an experience of intimacy with Christ, where affections are ordered and unity of life is given: love of God, love of neighbor.

5.1 Affections and the body

Mary is totally involved in the loving relationship with Jesus and manifests it "showily" in front of all the guests. This "waste of gratuitousness" is rooted in the love that has "taken her out of herself", and she can no longer do anything but manifest it in corporal and concrete gestures of totality and donation. She is not interested in what others may say, she is not interested in posture, nor what she has to do, she gives herself totally, she takes even her own hair to anoint the Lord. This implies enormous freedom from oneself. She does not love to retain, nor to possess, she touches the Lord free from her own sensuality, with a heart sanctified by the same loving action she performs. She is no longer afraid of risk, of danger, of losing her health, as in the past stages. With her bodily gestures she makes an oracle: "Sacrifice and oblation you did not want; but you have given me a body. Then I said, 'Behold, I come to do, O God your will!' (Hb10.5b.7).

³² There's elements Biblical that we can help deepen the text: **a)** The tuberose is a voice that appears only in John and in the parallel passage of Mk 14:3. However, it is found three times in the Song of Songs.³² (Ct 1,12;4,13.14), in which *the beloved manifests her love to the beloved identified as the King*. **b)** Another passage that seems to resonate in this text is that of Ct. 7,6 "with his mane, just like the purple; a king in those braids is imprisoned!". **c)** The fact that the protagonist is king, is immediately associated with *the idea of the Lord's Anointed One*. The verb "anointed" corresponds to anointings that are in relation to the Sacred. **e)** From the word "the feet" in the context of John, it can be deduced *the whole body*: Mary washes Jesus' feet with her hair (Jn 12:3), Jesus washes the disciples' feet with a towel (Jn 13:5). The literary connection between the two passages appears. All of it is sanctified and anointed through the action it performs in anointing Jesus. "Washing Jesus' feet with her own hair, Mary has re-absorbed on her head the tuberose with which she has perfumed the Lord. Mary by this action has been at once perfumed, anointed, and sanctified by her contact with "the Holy One of God" (Jn 6:69). She too "had been washed" and could have "part with" Him like Peter: "If I do not wash you, you will have no part with me" (Jn13.8). **f)** The allusion to the "day of the burial" of Jesus, to his death, is linked to Jn 2:13-21 in which Jesus refers to the destruction of the Temple: "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it" referring to the "Temple of his body". Jesus affirms that his body is the visible seat of the Invisible God. "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). The presence of the Divinity and Humanity of Jesus appears strongly. He is the Temple that dwells among us "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling place among us" (Jn 1:14). Mary has physical contact with the Temple-Body of Jesus (reserved only for priests in a condition of ritual purity) and is anointed, sanctified by her contact with the Holy One of God. **g)** The Pauline interpretation of the temple can be extended, in which the Temple from the Resurrection of Christ is every human being: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? For the temple of God is sacred and you are that temple" (1 Cor 3:16,17b). So in the risen

Christ every human being is the temple of God. So when Mary anoints her feet to the Humanity of Christ, she washes the feet of the new temple that is every human being. This same gesture is made by Jesus with his disciples, explaining what true love means and making the invitation to manifest love for one's neighbor through the symbolic gesture of washing one another's feet (Jn 13:12-14).

There is a deep unity between your inner and outer body maintenance. We can extend the gestures of Mary of Bethany to the brothers and sisters who are the Temple of God, it is time for you to embody love for your neighbor, to heal the wounds of humanity through a loving dedication to their service. Jesus identifies himself with the hungry, thirsty, strangers, imprisoned, naked, sick "whatever you did to one of these least of my brothers and sisters you did to me" (Mt 25:40). Jesus washes the feet of his brothers.

- What does it mean to you to live in love with your brothers and sisters in your life?
- Have you ever felt called, impelled to do a small service for sisters or brothers without anyone noticing?
- We are called to live the fire of love for God and for sisters and brothers, do you have any concrete example of a sister in your community or yours of this love for others? Is there anything that prevents you from living it? what do you feel? What would you have to work on a personal level?

5.2 Relationships

A deep relationship of friendship has begun with the Humanity of Christ, and at the same time, the identification of Jesus with brothers and sisters profoundly challenges the type of relationships of the person. We cannot say that we love God if we do not love our neighbor (1 Jn 3:17) How far can love of neighbor lead? to love enemies (Mt 5:44), to forgive seventy times seven times (Mt 18:21), to lay down our lives for sisters and brothers (1 Jn 3:16).

In this sense the love with which we love is the same love with which Jesus loved us. This new way of loving has its costs: surrender, expiration, self-denial, humble and selfless service. Resistance is not lacking because human selfishness always appears, however, a relationship of intimate and deep friendship with Christ transforms and strengthens the person to face the costs of daily surrender. Love makes her go out of herself and transcend. Whoever matures and lives in this stage, lives the same life of Jesus that fills the person with joy when she shares his sufferings (like the apostles). It is naïve to think that one can maintain a tone of surrender that is rooted in the love of God, without a daily relationship in prayer and listening to the Word. The shared Eucharist is nourishment in the faith that bears fruit of love for sisters and brothers. The relationship with Christ and with others is from the totality of the person, and in it is involved one's cognitive, volitional, affective, sexual part. We love as sexed beings. The fruit of love for Christ and concrete love for others is chastity that makes us love with pure love, without interest. Women, like Mary of Bethany, have human capacities³³ that, developed from generous love, enhance their apostolic fruitfulness in welcome and hospitality.

Our sense of solidarity with brothers and sisters leads us to do something concrete for others. If we see a need, we do not stop to make great plans, but sense what the other needs and respond. In this sense, our capacity to welcome people, together with intuition, are great feminine resources to live charity and do good. The person who has reached this stage reproduces with her attitudes and behaviors, the same gestures of Jesus who spent doing good to all (Acts 10:39). The weak point to work in this stage, is the excessive attachment to some people.³⁴

³³ Each religious family has a spirituality, and the concrete service it performs manifests various aspects of the face of Christ. This is done through different types of relationship with the recipients of his apostolic mission.

³⁴ "More if this soul neglects to put its hobby in something that not, lose everything, and it is as great a loss, as are the mercies that it is doing, and much greater than you can to make it more expensive", Teresa of Jesus. Book of Dwellings. M. 5.4.4.

- In prayer, in the relationship of friendship and love with Jesus, does love grow every day?
- Do I listen to the feelings that appear in my relationships with the sisters of my community, with each one, I analyze them and I ask myself what I feel towards each of them?
- What can I do to grow "love for one another" in the community?
- Can there be love without renunciation?
- To what do I feel invited by the Lord?

5.3 Women in their socio-cultural and ecclesial context

Just as Martha confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God in words (Jn 11:27), *Mary made this oracle with gestures*. This was certainly a prophetic proclamation, not only because of what she was doing, anointing Jesus, but because of the way she did it, as the prophets (Hos 1:2-8, Ez 12:1-20) *did their preaching with gestures* that put their own lives at stake. Mary in the anointing performs an act that transcends cultural customs (as we have already said, women anointed the dead, but never the living, and even less the Chosen One).

Throughout the history of Salvation, many saints on various occasions have performed actions and gestures with which they created new meanings. Their actions and words docile to the inspirations of the Spirit departed from ecclesial roles and perhaps also from the forms imposed by culture.

Let us say that his way of acting was a living oracle, capable of creating a dialogue between heaven and earth. They manifested with their actions, signs of the new order of grace established by Christ after his resurrection. With their gestures, they made explicit the love of God, and proclaimed that we are all his daughters and sons and brothers among us "All of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28- 29). Their lives are living icons of Jesus' gestures and words for every age.

- Do my gestures, actions, and behaviors manifest who I am and what I want to live?
- Are they gestures that, (without saying words), are clear to the people I deal with? (important to hear if they are clear to people or what I think)

