

# THROUGH CHILDREN'S EYES: FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

10 March 2016

We are now at the last Sunday of Lent before the busy-ness and chaotic life of Holy Week. The Sunday after this one will see Jesus arriving into Jerusalem at the time of Passover to a heroes' welcome, with "Hail Hosannas" and palm branches placed across the road to make a welcome mat, a red carpet, for his arrival into the City of David. And very soon after that triumphant entrance we will see the arrest, the abandonment, the complex cross-jurisdictional trial and sentencing, the execution... and the move into the resurrection.

Anna, aged 8, is our artist and she has captured the last calm semi-private moment in Jesus' life. He is at the home of his patrons, Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. They are having lunch. Jesus has decided to set his face towards Jerusalem, even though the disciples have said it is too dangerous. Everyone has concluded that for this controversial preacher/teacher to go into Jerusalem at this emotional time of the annual pilgrimage with political and religious tensions running high, will mean certain death. And yet Jesus is going to go.

With this decision, Mary goes to her room and takes her most expensive perfume. She returns to the dining hall and washes Jesus' feet and anoints him.

Our artist has captured all the elements of this stunning moment. The musician, who looks very much like our church musician, Aidan, is there. The table is set with china bowls and a candelabra befitting a grand house. Lazarus, the host, is seated; as is Jesus. Mary is kneeling and anointing. Is she weeping? It is hard to tell. The bottle of costly precious perfume sits beside her on the other side of Jesus' precious feet. The next material these feet will feel is the hard forged steel of a Roman nail.

There is a game, where you are asked to invite three people from history to dinner and consider what they would discuss. Often people say, they would pick Jesus of Nazareth as one of their guests. Anna, like the author of John's gospel, has Mary avoiding any conversation at all and rather simply weeping, anointing and kissing. What would you do at such a dinner?

Here is the age appropriate scripture for this Sunday upon which Anna has based her work:

## 13 MARCH – 5TH SUNDAY OF LENT

In the time of Jesus, people walked everywhere because there were no cars, buses or airplanes. Some rich people had horses. And merchants who had to move large bundles of supplies over long distances or families on the move might use a camel. Camels are still called the ships of the desert today.

But in Jesus' day most people just walked where they needed to go. And, since it was a warm, sandy and sometimes stony country, most people wore sandals instead of shoes or rubber boots. Rubber boots had not been invented yet. So when people were walking about it was not uncommon for their feet to get dirty or dusty.

When people came to visit their friends it was expected that the friends would provide a pitcher of water and a bowl so people could wash their feet before coming into the house. The arriving guest was invited to wash up and the host would provide the water and bowl and maybe even a towel.

One time, Jesus came to have lunch at a rich man's house. The rich man name was Lazarus and he was very excited to have his famous friend, Jesus, come to his house. He had special food prepared and musicians and a fancy table cloth. He had all the extras but he forgot the basics; he forgot to provide anything for foot washing. Jesus didn't want to embarrass Lazarus so he just kicked off as much sand as he could and came inside for lunch.

While he was at lunch, the sister of the rich man, Mary, who was also a friend of Jesus' saw that his feet needed cleaning. She went and got some water and her most extra-special perfume and sat down right on the floor beside Jesus and washed his feet. She then put on his feet the very veryvery expensive perfume. The whole room smelled great!

One of Jesus' other followers, a man named Judas, who was the church treasurer and looked after all the costs of Jesus' and his disciples' travels, was upset that this very veryvery expensive special perfume was wasted on feet. He asked, "Why was the perfume not sold so that the money could be used for the poor or other charities." He said this because he wanted to steal the money!

Jesus replied, "No, this was Mary's very special gift for him." Her brother had made a mistake and she was making up for that. Her brother had forgotten the water; the basic welcome, but Mary was giving an extra special welcome and it was a very special kind gift and it would be rude to say no.

What people didn't know was that Jesus was soon to die. Jesus knew this and Mary also thought it might happen so she was anointing him, putting special oil on him, which is often done when someone is at risk of dying.

Mary knelt down and washed Jesus' feet and then she anointed his feet with precious perfumed oil. And then she gave him a kiss and a hug to tell him he was loved.

