Lenten Homily
Monday March 29, 2010

Happy Lenten Monday everyone. As always, God has a message for us, and today it come to us from the Gospel of John. Usually at St. Columba's we have the sharpest Christian minds and best trained interpreters telling us what God is saying to us through His words in the Gospel, but today you have me. I'm thrilled and honored to be able to take a crack at what today's reading really should mean to us, though you'll forgive me for any amateurish mistakes in my interpretation.

In today's reading, Jesus is being having dinner with some old friends. Lazarus is there (and let me note that Lazarus would be thrilled these days now that his un-dead state is no longer considered a pre-existing condition), Martha serves the meal, and Mary joins the gathering. As the meal is being served, Mary lavishes costly perfume onto the feet of Jesus, filling the house with its scent. Judas scolds Mary for such extravagance, chiding her that the money spent on the perfume could have been given to the poor. Well, it's clear from this passage that Judas is going to be the proverbial skunk at the picnic, and I have to admit that I read ahead the assigned reading for today, and he does end up being a MAJOR disappointment. Sorry, spoiler alert. Anyhow, Jesus brushes aside Judas' criticism, noting that, "You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

At first blush, this is a puzzling statement to the untrained Jesus watcher. Isn't this the man who tells His disciples to sell all of their possessions and follow him in ministering to the meek and downtrodden? But after a good deal of thinking, Jesus' message is clear: Do good, and never stop working for social justice, but also take time to appreciate those that enrich your life.

Perhaps I'm only speaking for myself, but we never seem to have the time to appreciate those around us that love us the most and bring us the greatest joy. Perhaps time is today's version of sweet perfume. What we are being told here is that we need to show love and appreciation to those who have shaped us and made us what we are today. While I certainly have no intention of cleaning my mother's feet, much less with my hair, perhaps today's Gospel is a hint that I should go talk to her a bit after the service at Guapo's, see what is really happening with her, what is bringing her joy and pain at the moment. When my brother and dad get back from the road, maybe it's time to spend a night or two at home with them. Maybe this is something that we all need to do with our loved ones.

Even if we are spending all of our day ministering to the poor and sick, all day every day (I mean, come on, if you're not doing that then you're really slacking!), then Jesus' message here is that we need to take a little time to let those closest to us know that we care. We aren't going to have everyone that we love around us forever, and we need to take some time out from our busy lives to show them that we care. So however you can show that, whether it's through some time spent in the right place, or perfume rubbed on the right feet, Jesus reminds us every day that we need to take time out to appreciate the people we love.

Alex Kragie