

# SUNDAY PLUS

Pure love!

## A woman's touch



By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

On Palm Sunday, after Jesus entered Jerusalem riding a donkey, accompanied by waving branches and shouts of praise, why did Simon invite him to his home? It wasn't to thank Jesus for healing Simon's leprosy. It wasn't because Jesus was hot, tired and dusty. Did Simon and his guests gossip about Jesus rather than listen to him?

The unnamed woman noticed the discourtesy. Perhaps she rushed home to grab her best perfume with which to anoint Jesus. She hadn't expected to burst into tears, hadn't thought to carry a towel and so she dried his feet – as best she could – with her hair. She didn't care what others might say. Jesus understood and accepted her: that was all that mattered. Meanwhile, the "more important" people condemned both her lifestyle and her behaviour towards Jesus.

The crowd who welcomed Jesus on Palm Sunday included some people who, several days later, would call for his death, but there were also faithful followers to whom he meant everything and would later prove it by paying the ultimate price. Did those who called "Crucify him!" later bitterly regret their words?

The unnamed woman? When she anointed Jesus, she ignored the wagging tongues. Her heart was his forever, regardless of the consequences.

It takes courage to make a new start. How many bystanders thanked God for the privilege of seeing someone completely change her life for the better? Did they go home thinking that they had watched "a performance" and little else? Did anybody follow her example? Only God knows – and perhaps that's the best result.

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Today let us ask the Lord to free us from blaming others – like children: "No, it wasn't me! It's the other one, the other one..." Let us ask in prayer for the grace not to waste time polluting the world with complaints, because this is not Christian.

Pope Francis

## True love

By Catherine Gorman

When we truly love someone, we are willing to do pretty much anything for them, regardless of criticism from others, or the cost to ourselves.

We see this when the woman pours the jar of expensive ointment over the feet of Jesus, despite the complaints of others. Her critics focus on the gift's monetary value, unable to recognise its real worth.

Through love for us Jesus went willingly to the cross and humbled himself, even to accepting death. He was condemned by the shouts of the crowd and denied by one of his closest friends, despite having been praised on his arrival in Jerusalem just a few days earlier.

Can we strive, then, to ignore the reactions of others as we show our love for God and for others, in all that we do? Can our love stretch out to those beyond our circle of family and friends, to our wider community and those who are in most need throughout our world?

*Catherine Gorman, the Theology Communications Lead at CAFOD, also writes regularly for Redemptorist Publications.*


Feast of the week  
Friday 29 March

## Good Friday

When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss.  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small:  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

*Isaac Watts, 1707*

Jesus, Lord, on Palm Sunday the same people praised you who would condemn you to death only a few days later. Yet you didn't blame them. You forgave them and prayed for them. Help me to follow your example.  Amen.

**Today:**  
Procession: Mark 11:1-10 or John 12:12-26  
Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7  
Philippians 2:6-11  
Mark 14:1 – 15:47

**Monday:**  
Isaiah 42:1-7  
John 12:1-11

**Tuesday:**  
Isaiah 49:1-6  
John 13:21-33, 36-38

**Wednesday:**  
Isaiah 50:4-9  
Matthew 26:14-25

**Thursday:**  
Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26  
John 13:1-15

**Friday:**  
Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12  
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9  
John 18:1 – 19:42

**Saturday:**  
Exodus 14:15 – 15:1  
Romans 6:3-11  
Mark 16:1-7

**Next Sunday:**  
Acts 10:34, 37-43  
Colossians 3:1-4 or  
1 Corinthians 5:6-8  
John 20:1-9