



## Clincarthill Parish Church – Reflections for Lent #3 – Week beginning Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2024



### Bible Passage – John 12: 1-11 (NIV UK)

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about half a litre of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.'

Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So, the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

In this passage, John continues his account of events in the small town of Bethany, home of the sisters Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. Shortly before this, Lazarus had died and Jesus had brought him back to life, but he had then withdrawn from public view to a wilderness area. Now, just before Passover, Jesus returns to Bethany. The dinner described by John was possibly given just after sundown on a Saturday, immediately after the Jewish Sabbath had ended. The next day, Sunday, was the day of Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. Mary's behaviour at this dinner would have been quite shocking in her culture. People would have taken offence not just at the cost of the perfume she used to anoint Jesus, but also her action in letting her hair down in front of men other than her immediate family, and the strength of emotion she displayed towards Jesus.

### Some Questions for Reflection

- *People sometimes talk about giving up things for Lent. What did Mary give up for Jesus' sake in this passage? Why did she do it?*
- *In what ways do you see a conflict between meeting the needs of the poor and giving honour to Jesus? How would you reconcile that conflict?*
  - *Reflect on what you already give up to honour Jesus. What else are you being prompted to give up?*
- *Reflect on what you already give up for the sake of those you consider "the poor". What else are you being prompted to give up?*

### Prayer

Lord Jesus, you gave up so much more than we can possibly comprehend when you came into this world to live with us and to die for our sake; thank you. We confess that we find it hard to give up anything for your sake; forgive us. Show us how to care for the poor of this world in your Name. Amen.