Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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"Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my Spirit" (Isaiah 42:1).

Monday of Holy Week

Is 42:1-7; Jn 12:1-11

Isaiah's four songs of the "Suffering Servant" (found in chapters 42, 49, 50 and 52) build a moving portrait of someone sent to change a sinful world not by force but by self-sacrificing love. The Servant relies entirely on God, whose way with the world also does not correct the course of history with power, but by paradox and patience. These songs influence the Gospel writers because they seem to direct Jesus' own actions. He is praying the scriptures and living the mystery they promise. God will save the world by love, and Jesus is living out this script right to the end.

In today's song, the servant doesn't burst onto the scene with shouts and warnings, nor does he thrust correction on the weak and wounded, but moves with gentle persuasion. In the face of violent opposition, it hardly seems an effective strategy. Pacifism is a noble ideal that does not defeat deliberate evil without a fight. We think of the situation facing Ukraine. What is Jesus thinking? He is listening to God's Word and obeying its paradoxical strategy.

After his triumphal entry into Jerusalem and bold symbolic act of cleansing the temple, Jesus must have seemed to his disciples to be ready to take charge. Retreating to Bethany and a banquet in his honor at the house of Martha, Mary and

Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead, Jesus was on a roll.

The only person who seems to have understood what was to follow was Mary, who interrupts the festivities to anoint Jesus' feet and head with expensive nard, a perfume reserved for burial rites. Her heartbreaking act of love for Jesus accepts his decision to die in order to defeat sin by embracing death. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins the sins of the world, whose blood on the cross will lead the Exodus to new life.

We should not be surprised to find the fourth Gospel loaded with fulfillment, as every scene and symbol resonates through Hebrew history and the layered liturgical commemorations that were the foundation of God's covenant with his people. Everything converges toward this moment and in the person of Jesus.

To enter Holy Week is to be prepared to pass through colossal defeat to a darkness only faith will endure until glory peeks through like the first hint of dawn on Easter morning. Among the disciples, only the women seem aware of the trauma they will witness. Things will get worse before they get better. Stay tuned.

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