

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK – APRIL 6

Palm Sunday is often described as a roller coaster ride. There is the highpoint of the happiness and hope shown in Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, which then rushes down pell mell to the arrest, trial, torture, and crucifixion of Jesus—done to the delight of the on-lookers who had observed the joyous parade only a few days before. The sudden changes bring on a disorienting spiritual whiplash. The last days of Jesus are packed into a liturgy that hurtles relentlessly to its sad and solemn end.

Holy Week, in contrast, features daily points of concentration. These accumulate and culminate in the “Triduum” the three great days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

Today we are given the scene in the gospel of John (chapter 12) in which a woman anoints Jesus with fantastically expensive ointment. Judas roundly criticizes her extravagance saying the price of the fragrant salve could have been turned to charity. Jesus chooses to see it as an act of discernment, and makes his famous remark that the poor are always available for our charity, but the occasion of his presence is worthy of special attention.

When you consider this scene, you might ask why Jesus answers. Indeed, from whom does Judas seek a response, if anyone? Is this a serious question or a “pot-stirrer”?