

Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair.

John 12:3

After Peg's father died, she rummaged through parts of his house preparing it for sale. When Peg was a child, the bottom drawer of the china closet was always her dad's exclusive domain. She prepared to open it now like a priest approaching the sacred altar. Inside, Peg found the normal treasures stored against a rainy day: rubber bands, expired coupons and a Swiss Army knife. In an old wallet, she discovered a forgotten twenty-dollar bill and a creased, browning paper. Unfolded, the note revealed a 1960's Christmas shopping list. Beside her name was scribbled "skates, pajamas and Slinky." Beside her mother's name, there was a single phrase: "Chanel N°5."

Peg's middle class family avoided extravagance. With five children, they could not afford it. Her father's one excursion into luxury was to anoint her mother with this prized perfume. The annual act released a balm of silent devotion between them redeeming any of the year's frayed misunderstandings.

During Holy Week, we see Mary anoint Jesus's feet with costly aromatic nard. We watch Jesus kneel to pour a sacred blessing over his disciples' feet. We experience God's lavish compassion wash over us in blood and water, in sacrament and sacrifice. These acts draw us into God's infinite, unquenchable love.

Our names have been folded eternally into God's heart. An extravagant mercy has been given for us. This week, walking with Jesus from the supper table, through the garden and on to Calvary, may we embrace the deep anointing of God's Passion for us. May it redeem us and open us to full Easter joy!