

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

Your letter for today is more of an exercise rather than a letter. My husband and I went on a daylong retreat at Christ Church in Aspen, Colorado. We are wintering in this beautiful mountainous village celebrating my husband's retirement. When we read in this church's bulletin its offer of a day long guided retreat, we decided to go and I'm so glad we did and do recommend such an activity to you, Pilgrim. It is good to pull away, and slow down and "feed the soul" as our presenter stated. Our Lord Jesus did and so should we. You can do it alone or in a group. Formal or informally -- organized or not. Some of the very best retreats can be two hours spent sitting in a comfortable chair and prayerfully reading and relaxing - resting in a scene from the Bible. The Holy Spirit can lead you into a sweet time of communion, making that passage come alive, more meaningful, more personal with insights that seem designed just for you.

On this particular retreat, the minister had chosen Mark 14:3-9 on which to focus.

And while he (our Lord) was at Bethany, in the home of Simon the Leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment, of pure nard, very costly. And she broke the flask and poured it over his head.

But there were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment thus wasted? For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they reproached her.

But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always will have the poor with you, and whenever you will, you can do good to them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for burying. And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

During the next six hours these words were re-read numerous times intermingled with times of quiet reflection. As participants, we were asked to list words or phrases that this scene brought to mind. Another exercise was prayerfully reading over the scripture while prayerfully molding a pitcher out of modeling clay. Goodness, Pilgrim, you've never seen such different shaped pitchers, just like the group gathered.

After meditating on the words, "she did what she could," we wrote down on a piece of paper what gifts we wanted to give to our Lord.

The exercise that I'd like to share with you, Pilgrim, instead of your usual letter is the one in which we were given 20 minutes to write as if we were there at the dinner itself in Bethany. We could be any character, any object or thing - as long as we were in the scene. By God's grace we hoped that

such an activity would allow the experience to become more alive, more real. It becomes an eyewitness account. We are the witness. It is our history. It is our reality, as it should be for each one of us is Christ's own, Pilgrim.

So here goes. Let your imagination go - I did and I think that's OK sometimes. This is not sacrilegious, it was written prayerfully - but with Joy. Who am I in this scene, Precious Pilgrim? I am perfume.

"I am perfume - the most expensive perfume that you can buy. My original name was "Nard" - today you'd know me better by the word "Joy." I like that name best. The transformation took place long ago. The formula has always been the same, but my new naming -- my baptism - if you'd like - when I received my Christian name - took place when I was taken to a dinner party. Boy, was I glad to get out! I'd been stuffed in a jar and placed on a high shelf most of my life.

You see, this dear lady bought me right after I was made. I called her dear even though people didn't - in fact, most of the community called her by all sorts of derogatory names - ones which would have made her blush, cry and feel ashamed. She would hide her feelings with an angry or disdainful or disinterested face. Ah, but I knew her. I lived with her. I could observe her from my high vantage point. She truly was a good, decent, loving person - she just hid her true self as if she were stuck in a jar, too.

What is that story about a "genie in a jar?" That's how my lady found herself and so did I. I was meant to bring pleasure and enjoyment to the senses. One whiff of me would bring to mind - meadows of flowers and gentle breezes - sparkling fireflies and rainbows and dances between lovers - but instead, I was stuck - stuck in this blasted jar.

My good lady had spent years saving up her money to buy me and once she'd made the purchase, she didn't know what to do with me. As a matter of fact, she didn't know what to do with herself. But guess what? Miracle of miracles! She ran into this man named Jesus - He saw through her façade. He loved her for who she really was - even knew her better than she did herself. And He loved her totally. (Psst, He loves you too, Pilgrim.) She perceived this love with just a glance of His eyes and a touch of His hand. I knew something extraordinary had happened when she came rushing through the door, grabbed me off the top shelf and started running, running! "Why, this lady who was usually so heavy-hearted and walked around as if the world were on her shoulder was actually light-footed, almost taking flight!

As you can imagine, Pilgrim, I was delighted to get off that dusty old shelf. Finally, I might be put to proper use! My lady ran down the street and burst through the door of one of the most respected residences of the town. I almost popped my top! Previously, she wouldn't have been caught dead even walking down this respectable part of town. But bam, through

the door she went. She dropped to her feet at her new friend's feet. She hit me hard against the floor and broke my seal and poured me out onto this Man's head. Yea - Yes! At last! I was used the way I was meant to be used - I'm made to be used! The room smelled gloriously, I must humbly admit. My name at that moment was changed from Nard to Joy - and goodness - my lady's was changed too - her façade broke. As my scent spread throughout the room, I heard the Man Jesus say, "She did what she could." Was He talking about me or my lady or you, Pilgrim? All I know, it was a good send-off - she did what she could. Peace."

As I said, Pilgrim, my name is Joy. What is yours? I bet it is a beautifully fragrant one. Be a Godly scent for His glory. And if you have a chance, may I recommend crawling into a Bible scene and resting in it. Such an activity will help keep your aroma of Christ strong. For as you know in 2 Corinthians 2:14, it says, "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere." Go spread some, Pilgrim. God bless.

Lucy