

Sermon for Monday in Holy Week, Year C, 2007
Saint James the Apostle Evangelical Lutheran Church / Brogue
2.iv.07, 7:00 p.m., Holy Eucharist (spoken)
Isaiah 42:1-9, Psalm 36:5-11, Hebrews 9:11-15, John 12:1-11

J. J. !

Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who
was and Who is to come! ✠ Amen.

The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

--John 12:3b

Even though our sense of smell is nothing compared to that of many of our fellow creatures, we know how quickly odors and fragrances can travel with the gasses of which they are a part. The fragrant aroma of a good meal being cooked can travel to all parts of a house, unless it is contained, stimulating taste buds and imaginations of those who will be privileged to eat that meal. The acrid odor of an overcooked meal

sometimes gets our attention where the oven timer failed to.

When Mary of Bethany opens the nard she had bought to anoint Jesus' body in death, the aroma fills the house like incense. It reaches the Judas, in whose nostrils it stinks like the guilt of treachery in his own heart, and it reaches Jesus, for whom the costly fragrance is nothing in comparison to the genuine love and devotion of the woman at His feet. For Judas, the smell of nard is Law, God's judgment upon him, while for Jesus it is Gospel, the fragrance of the Holy Spirit confirming the Father's love and faithfulness that will bear Him up through suffering, torture and death.

How does the Holy Spirit in the Church 'smell' to us? Not that God the Spirit *is* that which He is only *like*, a mighty gale or a gentle breeze, a fair wind that fills a ship's sails and carries it forward, or an unseen but potent gas. I mean to say that that which is done in the Spirit, consciously through Christ, and purely for the sake of the Father's glory will be sensed as sweet and fragrant by all in the Church who believe the promises of God. To those who do not believe that God's Kingdom is coming and is already here, 'no good deed will go unpunished,' as the saying goes and all love spent on Christ and on the neighbor or on His Church in His name and for His sake will irritate the linings of such nostrils. Apart from faith, martyrdoms—beginning with the one on Calvary—will

be cynically dismissed as political foolishness, the motives behind all good works will be suspect and change, even where it is essential for the vitality of the congregation, will be viewed as an unnecessary menace to the way things are, have been and desperately must remain.

It is a sign of such vitality in the Church to become interested when we smell new aromas, for this can be a sign that the Holy Spirit is cooking up something delicious for the People of God. If it is a rotten mistake, that will be evident to all soon enough. Pray that we recognize and celebrate the wonderful aroma of God's love at work in the world and in this Holy House and this congregation by this act of compassion here, this venture of forgiveness and trust

there, and may it fill the whole House with its fragrance! ✠ Amen.



Now to Him Who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made of us a Kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion with the Father and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever. ✠ Amen.



S. D. G. !