

Chapter 6
The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick
[Mosaic of the sick man being cared for by Aldo Spirito]

The mosaic by Aldo Spirito of Jesus bringing healing to the sick man reminds us that we too have been given the command to “Cure the sick” (Mt 10:8). Share this guided meditation from Mark 14:3-9 of Jesus' anointing by a woman at Bethany (from Encountering Jesus by Patty McCulloch). Dim the lights in the room and have the students sit quietly with their eyes closed. Begin by telling the students that "You are with Jesus. You are at supper. A woman comes to Jesus and you will have the opportunity to talk with her. So. . . “ (continue on with the meditation, pausing between line double line breaks and a bit longer on boldface lines).

Enter into this place.
Relax.
Let go of everything.

Breathe in.
Hold.
Breathe out.
Breathe in.
Hold.
Breathe out.

Be still.
Relax.
Let all your worries fly away.

Breathe in.
Hold.
Breathe out.
Breathe in.

Hold.
Breathe out.

Imagine . . .

You are sitting around the table with friends.
Smell the rich aroma of a home-cooked meal.
Enjoy the companionship.

Picture yourself there with your friends.

A woman who does not belong to your group enters the room.
She looks around and heads toward Jesus.

What is she doing here?
What does she have in her hands?
What does she want?

Watch her.
She has a bottle.
She opens it.
A wonderful perfume fills the air.
She lifts the bottle over Jesus' head.
She pours out the perfume on him.
She rubs it through his hair with her hands.

Why is she doing this?
What is Jesus reaction?

Judas yells out,
"What is the point of such a waste of expensive perfume?
It could have been sold for over thirty dollars and the money given to the poor."
Everyone else is whispering, gossiping.
The woman ignores all of you.
She continues to anoint Jesus's head with perfume.
Look at Jesus and the woman.

The woman finishes.
Jesus glances around the table.
He says, "Let her alone; why must you make her feel uncomfortable?
She has done a beautiful thing for me.
You have the poor with you always.
You can reach out to them whenever you like."
Reflect on these words.
How are they true?

Jesus continues,
"You will not always have me with you.
She has done all she could.
For she has anointed my body in preparation for burial.
I assure you that wherever the gospel is preached throughout the whole world,
this deed of hers will also be recounted,
as her memorial to me."
Sit back and wonder what these words mean.

Go up to the woman.
Ask her why she anointed Jesus.
What does she say?

Talk to her about her actions.

Listen to her.

It is time to reenter this space.

Say good-bye for now.

Ask Jesus to lead your way into the rest of the day.

Say thank you.

Come back gently.

Open your eyes.

Remember.

Sit up.