

# WE MUST LOVE AND WORSHIP GOD

—by St. Nektarios—

**Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair (Jn. 12:3).**

Look at the clever idea of this grateful soul! Do you see how this loving soul expressed herself wholeheartedly? Full of joy and fervor on account of the Lord's presence in her home, Mary offers tokens of unsurpassed hospitality, unparalleled love, and unprecedented reverence.

What a beautiful deed! How expressive indeed! Who does not marvel at the noble manner with which Mary receives and tends to the Lord! Who is not touched at the sight of Mary's most hospitable actions! But what prompted Mary to carry out this deed that bestowed her with such honor? We will answer this vital question by saying that, internally, she was essentially impelled by the divine love warming her heart and the uncontainable desire for worship, and, externally, by the customary practice of ancient civilizations. Ancient peoples gave great significance to hospitality, and they would take great care of the people visiting their homes. One of the foremost services they would offer their guest was the washing of his feet. This was considered an exceedingly honorable act, and, thus, oftentimes it was carried out by the housewives themselves. Using this custom as a basis, Mary expressed to Jesus Christ in the most expressive manner possible the feelings of gratitude and love flourishing within her heart.

Yes my fellow Christians. Through this manner Mary revealed the hidden desires within the depths of her heart; for our actions are directives of the heart that describe and depict our very hearts themselves—something that our tongue is incapable of doing. Mary's action, therefore, is a mirror upon which the dominating emotion within her heart was magnificently reflected. Mary's grateful heart was not satisfied with a routine reception; it was not content with the usual and common methods of hospitality. Rather, it desired through an extraordinary manner and a remarkable reception to externalize her distinct sentiment for the person to whom she was attending. She desired to take care of the exceptional visitor in an exceptional manner. Thus, she replaced the water with a most-precious myrrh, and she substituted the apron and hand towel with the hairs of her chaste head. Truly, how appropriately did she disclose her feelings! What human tongue or skilled rhetoric could possibly document all this and detail what Mary carried out silently in a moment's time! Certainly none. Because the feelings of the heart are expressed not with words but with

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actions. For the language of the heart is different than the language of the mind. And for this reason the heart expresses itself one way; the mind, another way. Truly, how many things does a single tear shed by a repentant heart, by a heart in anguish and sorrow, express and reveal!

Through this mystical language, Mary vocalized and conveyed to Jesus (and to the entire world) her lofty and noble inner feelings, and her love and worship for Christ. Even though Saint John omitted countless other events [from Jesus' life], as he himself attests—for according to the Evangelist, if they all were to be recorded one by one, “even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (Jn. 21:25)—nonetheless, he deemed it necessary to preserve Mary's virtuous act for us, and he presented it as a precedent of divine love and pleasing worship.