

I know some of you have bought and sold houses and condominiums. I've never done that. The biggest purchase I've ever made are the vehicles I drive. In September of 2010 I bought the pickup I'm still driving. I remember the day the sale came off. I was giving my old truck as a trade-in, so I had to get my title of ownership – my pink-slip from my Mom's safety deposit box at the bank. And I clearly remember the moment I signed my name to that little piece of paper. It was the moment of no-return. The truck as no longer mine.

Jesus isn't after our truck, vote, or money. But He is after our hearts. He wants to win your heart, my heart, every heart. He doesn't do this by rhetoric or power. He captures our hearts – if He does – by laying down His life for us. As Jesus says, in our Gospel, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." He gives His life because He is driven by love. You are His friend. You are worth the Passion and Death of God. You matter so much to the Lord.

How do we respond to such a God and such a love? Remember Captain John Miller and James Ryan from Saving Private Ryan? How do we respond to such a sacrifice? I think the best answer to that question is John 12: 1-8, the story of the woman and the jar of perfume. Read it with me. "Six days before Passover Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. They gave a dinner for him there, and Martha served, while Lazarus was one of those reclining at table with him. 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; the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Then Judas the Iscariot, one [of] his disciples, and the one who would betray him, said, 'Why was this oil not sold for three hundred days' wages and given to the poor?' He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and held the money bag and used to steal the contributions. So Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'"

In the middle of a dinner party Mary takes this ointment and bathes Jesus' feet with it. Imagine putting almost a whole year's salary in a jar – and then pouring it all out at once. What a conversation stopper! “The house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.” I don't know what Nard smells like, so I think of chocolate chip cookies, one of my favorite smells! A few weeks ago Fr. Chad baked chocolate chip cookies. I'm in the back suite, as far as possible from the kitchen, but the odor silently engulfed me nonetheless. That must be what the smell of the oil was like. It was all encompassing.

As a sign of what Jesus had done for her, Mary gives Jesus everything. Mary is at home! She doesn't need to use her hair to wipe Jesus' feet. There were towels, surely. But she has to put her whole self into this gift. Others don't get it. What a waste! Judas is each one of us. He sees materially. Why waste it on Jesus? But Jesus sees love. It moves Him. He defends her, reducing the protesters to silence. Jesus believes

He is worthy of this act! That is not arrogance, but love. She gives Him her heart, and He's thrilled by it.

What about us? Have we given our hearts – our whole hearts to Christ? This is what Jesus asks us to do. Let's go to Mark 8:34-35. "Jesus summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, 'Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loss his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it.'" That sounds so hard and miserable, doesn't it? But we don't understand. This is Jesus' way of asking us, "Will you be completely mine? Mine, not just in your spare time, not just on Sundays, no small print? Like Mary, will you give everything to me?"

The key to understanding these words, "must deny himself" is that Jesus doesn't mean Lent. He means something deeper and richer. It's a matter of surrendering ownership of our lives to Jesus himself. Let's go back to my signing the title of my pick-up. The moment I did

that, it was no longer mine. It was someone else's to do with, drive, or sell, as he or she pleased. Similarly, Jesus asks us, "Will you sign the title of your life over to me? Will you let me drive your life?"

Mary said, "Yes" – because Jesus had first said "Yes" to her – and to you – and to me! We know from the Great Story that He gave you and me everything He had. He had laid down His life for us, His friends. Now He asks, "Will you now be mine – as I became yours?" That is the question from the cross.

We're now going to distribute small cards to each of you. [Read] This is the title-deed -- the pink-slip to your life. And to sign this card is to symbolically sign over our life to Jesus. Can you sign your life over to Jesus? I'm not asking you to make that decision right at this moment, because I want you to really think and pray over it. I want it to be real and maybe you're not ready for that now. Letting God drive our lives is serious business. But we've been spending nine weeks hearing the

story of God and human beings and what that story means for each of us. We need to do something about that story if we believe it.

We are leaving an urn here in the sanctuary beneath the altar through Pentecost. If at some time before then you feel called to sign your life more fully to Jesus please enter the sanctuary and put your card in the urn – at any time the church is open. We will collect and then burn them as an offering to God on the Wednesday night after Pentecost here in the plaza. Pray about this and ask the Holy Spirit for the grace to take that next step.