

MARCH 31 2026 FATHER VIJAI AMIRTHARAJ

In 12th Century England Thomas Becket and Henry II were the closest of friends. Becket was brilliant, charming, and completely loyal to his friend, the king. And the king rewarded Becket with his wealth, with power, and with the highest office of the court.

And when the Archbishop of Canterbury died, King Henry appointed his friend Thomas Becket as the head of the Church in England, as a way of keeping the Church under royal control. But once consecrated as Archbishop of Canterbury, Becket changed. His spiritual calling awakened in him a fierce royalty and loyalty to Christ.

And when Henry tried to usurp authority from the Church, Becket challenged him, insisting that God's law should come above the rules and laws of the kings. As a result, their friendship was shattered, and the tensions between the two friends reached its climax.

And on December 29th, 1170, four knights, allegedly close to the king, stormed Canterbury Cathedral, and murdered Becket. And his death shocked the Medieval world, and led to his immediate veneration as a martyr. The site where he was murdered became a pilgrimage destination, and a couple of years later, he was canonized.

Now sisters and brothers, in today's Gospel, we are given an account of a dialogue that would lead to one of the greatest betrayals in human history - the betrayal of Jesus by Judas his friend.

In yesterday's Gospel, we heard about Mary anointing the feet of Jesus with an expensive perfume and oil. It showed the extravagant devotion of Mary to Jesus. It is extravagant, not only for how much it costs, but also how she gave it to Jesus. If she were anointing Jesus for burial, she would cover his head with the oil. But in an act of adoration and

worship, she anoints the feet instead. It is as if she is saying to Jesus: "I love you, Jesus, for all that you have done and for what you are about to do."

And Jesus would have expected the same level of devotion from Judas. After all, he one of the ones that was hand-picked by Jesus himself. And Jesus and Judas have been together for three years, and Judas would have learned a lot about Jesus and his mission. But somehow, Judas lost his devotion. He became so selfish that he could not longer give Jesus anything. Unlike Mary, and like Henry, he was interested in only what he could get, rather than what he could give.

Now sisters and brothers, if we look at our own lives, we will notice that we have some aspects of Mary in us, but also some aspects of Judas in us. Sometimes we are filled with devotion, and faithfulness to Jesus, sometimes we are so focused on our own self and our needs.

Lent, as we know, is an opportune time to examine our way of life—our attitudes and our priorities. But then Lent is almost over, and as we find ourselves in Holy Week, I really hope that this season was a fruitful time for all of us to examine our lives, and to come closer to the Lord.

And as we approach the holiest days of our Christian faith, it is my belief and my hope that all of us will journey through these holy days with devotion like Mary, so that, with Jesus, we will experience that joy and hope of the resurrection.