
The Fragrance of Christ

“My spikenard has yielded its (or His) odour”¹

Let us see the Bride Church in this passage in the character of that Mary of whom it is said with all fitness that she brings a pound of ointment of great price, and anoints the feet of Jesus, and wipes them with her hair.² Through the hair of her head she as it were gets that ointment back, and receives it again for herself, steeped in the character and virtue of His body; thus through the hair with which she wiped His feet, she draws to herself the odour not so much of the ointment as of the very Word of God, and what she has put on her own head is the fragrance of Christ, rather than that of the nard. Wherefore she says: ‘My spikenard, having been given to the body of Christ, has yielded me back His odour.’³

“Thy name is as ointment emptied out. Therefore have the maidens loved Thee, have they drawn Thee. We will run after Thee into the fragrance of Thine ointments.”⁴

Every soul draws and receives to itself the Word of God according to the measure of its capacity and faith. But when souls have thus drawn the Word of God to themselves, and have ingrafted Him into their minds and understandings, and have experienced the pleasantness of His sweetness and odour, when they have received the fragrance of His ointments and have grasped at last the reason for His coming, the motives of the Redemption and Passion, and the love whereby He, the Immortal, went *even to the death of the cross* for the salvation of all men, then these maiden souls, attracted by all this as by the odours of a divine and ineffable perfume and being filled with vigour and complete alacrity, run after Him and hasten to the odour of His sweetness, not at a slow pace, nor with lagging steps, but swiftly and with all the speed they can; even as did he who said: *I so run, that I may obtain.*⁵

The soul makes herself fair to draw the Bridegroom down from heaven

‘And the odour of Thy perfumes is above all spices.’⁶ Not with one perfume only does He come anointed, but with all. And if He will condescend to make my soul His Bride too and come to her, how fair must she then be to draw Him down from heaven to herself, to cause Him to come down to earth, that He may visit His beloved one! With what beauty must she be adorned, with what love must she burn that He may say to her the things which He said to the perfect Bride, about *thy neck, thine eyes, thy cheeks, thy hands, thy body, thy shoulders, thy feet!*⁷

¹ Song of Songs 1:12

² See John 12:3 for the account of Mary’s anointing of Jesus’ feet.

³ *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 2.9 (p. 160)

⁴ Song of Songs 1:3-4

⁵ *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 1.4 (pp.75-6) (with ref to 1 Cor. 9:24)

⁶ Song of Songs 1:3

⁷ *Homily on the Song of Songs* 1.3 (p.272)