

25th March 2024

Outsider

“And the house was filled with the fragrance of her perfume.”

Bible, *John 12:3*

Monday of Holy Week – John 12:1-11

*This week is about people in the Holy Week narratives
in whom we might recognise ourselves.*

Patsy was an outsider. She'd been ostracised by her peer-group. Nobody wanted anything to do with horrible Patsy. But Valerie? Now ... she was Queen Bee, and when she got engaged, everyone was happy for *her*. Close to the wedding date, a “show of presents” was arranged. Valerie's home was a buzz of pleasure and friendship with the in-crowd – until Patsy arrived. She hadn't been invited. Nobody wanted her, least of all Valerie. But there she was, in a stunned and silent room, offering Valerie a small gift. “I couldn't let the day go by,” Patsy said. She didn't stay long.

On her wedding day, Valerie had an embroidered silk handkerchief hidden in her bouquet. As she fingered Patsy's unexpected gift, she pondered the relationship with an outsider which had just begun.

Out of place

It was awkward when she arrived. The clothes weren't right.
She wore thick-make up that didn't improve her looks much.
She felt as awkward as she expected, an unwelcome stranger –
the wrong person, in the wrong place, at the wrong time.

No one expected her. But they gave the outsider some space.
There were embarrassed smiles as the room fell silent.
Not everyone wanted this; some still felt strange and awkward –
with the wrong person, in the wrong place, at the right time.

She didn't feel awkward as she left. She'd had her moment.
She'd made an effort; the thick make-up was her way of doing it right,
to cover things up, especially the awkward strangeness –
as the wrong person, in the right place, at the right time.

They knew they'd once been awkward strangers too.
But the smile on other made-up faces had offered them a welcome.
Things change when a choice is made to accept an outsider –
as the right person, in the right place, at the right time.

*Adapted from “The Uninvited Guest” and “Out of Place” from
‘Welcoming Each Wonder’ by Tom Gordon – www.ionabooks.com*

A prayer for today

If I'm an outsider, please accept me, and help me to welcome other outsiders too. Amen

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