



Our Most Honored Guests

By Cheryl Odden

In Luke 7, Simon invited an "honored guest" into his home — Jesus Christ. While Jesus was at Simon's home, a woman entered the room and began to weep, pouring an alabaster flask of fragrant oil on Jesus' feet and wiping them with her hair.

Watching the exchange, Simon said to himself that if Jesus really was a prophet, he would know who and what kind of woman was at his feet, and in turn, he would put her in her place. But Jesus responded with a parable — the creditor and two debtors, one of whom owed more. Both were forgiven of their debts. Yet, the one with the greater debt naturally loved the creditor more.

Then Jesus turned to the woman and then to Simon and said, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head." (Luke 7:44) Jesus went on to rebuke Simon because he did not offer his "honored guest," a kiss, or oil for his head.

Every month you invite "guests" into your home — the stories of the persecuted Body of Christ in VOM's monthly newsletter. Their overcoming testimonies wash the feet of our souls, giving us a fresh perspective. This fresh perspective is fragrant oil on our heads, initially causing some relative discomfort to our Western lifestyles but in the long run bringing new life.

This cloud of witnesses wets our cheeks with a welcome kiss of gratitude, giving us a renewed vigor to embrace what trials God, out of his divine sovereignty, has allowed in our lives, be it a chronic illness, a conflict-ridden relationship, a rebellious child or bearing no child at all.

The world and some religious leaders look upon such guests, our persecuted family, as worthless, a detriment to their agendas and reputations, much like Simon looked upon the woman at Jesus' feet. In reality, our persecuted brothers and sisters hold the key to inestimable riches that can be unearthed through suffering.

Out of gratitude we return such gestures by washing the feet of our persecuted family with our prayers, our tears, the fragrant aroma of Christ within us, thanking God for their role in the Body of Christ. These faithful brothers and sisters keep our motives in check. Their courage causes our seemingly insurmountable trials to fade as they are held to the light of the eternal glory that awaits us. Their persistent love for their persecutors gives us endurance in the midst of conflict. Their response to material losses show us their confidence in eternal gains, knowing their inheritance is one that is imperishable and rests with Christ. But most importantly, our persecuted family brings us into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

When they weep, we weep. When they rejoice, we rejoice. When they lose a child, we feel their loss. When their brother is put in prison, our brother is imprisoned. Their feet are weary, and their heads are aching for the comfort of fresh oil.

May we continue to invite these honored guests into our hearts, washing their tired, callused feet with our prayers and anointing their heads with the oil of thanksgiving!