

Reflections

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The Betrayal of Judas

“I tell you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples were very upset and began to ask him, one after the other, “Surely, Lord, you don’t mean me?” Jesus answered, “One who dips his bread in the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man will die as the Scriptures say he will, but how terrible for that man who will betray the Son of Man! It would have been better for that man if he had never been born!” Judas, the traitor, spoke up, “Surely, Teacher, you don’t mean me?” he asked. Jesus answered, “So you say.”

The betrayal of Judas Iscariot seems totally repugnant to us. It is hard for us to understand the mystery of that man. What motives did he have to betray his Master?

One day, he was chosen to form a part of the circle of his most intimate friends. He accompanied Him during his public life. He listened to his teachings. He saw his countless miracles. Nevertheless, he hands Him over for thirty coins. What might have happened in that man for him to reach such extremes?

It is not known for sure which were the motives for his betrayal. Some think it was because of greed. According to the Gospel of St. John, he was the treasurer and the other apostles suspected he was a thief. But, on the other hand, thirty coins was very little money at that time. We also know that when Judas found out that Jesus had been condemned, he became remorseful and returned the thirty coins to the high priests.

Others believe that Judas felt cheated by his Master: Jesus wasn’t what he expected. He expected his people to be freed from the yoke of the Romans. He expected a political Messiah. The other apostles also had human ambitions, but in their contact with Jesus, they were able to purify their faith. Judas was not able to accomplish that and the betrayal was his means for vengeance.

Regardless, it is very difficult to penetrate into the mystery of that man and of his action: a mystery of weakness and human wickedness.

In contrast, we have to see the attitude of Jesus before Judas. More than a year before these events, the Lord warns Judas: “I chose the twelve of you, didn’t I? Yet one of you is a devil!” (JN 6, 70)

Later, when the time approaches, a profound act of humility before the one who is about to betray Him: “So He rose from the table. Then he poured some water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples’ feet” (JN 13, 4) – and we know that Judas was among them.

Following is a second warning before the twelve: “I assure you that one of you is going to betray me... The Son of Man is going as it is written of Him; but woe of him who is going to betray the Son of Man. It would be better if he had not been born.” And when Judas asks Him if He is talking about him, Jesus confirms it.

And finally, when Judas consumes his betrayal with a kiss, the Lord asks him: “Friend, why are you here? Is it with a kiss that you betray the Son of Man?” (LK 22, 48) Until the end, Jesus considers him a friend...

On the one hand, Jesus – by all possible means – tries to save Judas, to stop him in time. On the other hand, He wants to accept and fulfill the Will of the Father in everything.

Dear brothers and sisters, and we? Do we have motives to feel indignant against Jesus, motives to condemn Him?

Questions for reflection

1. How many times have we betrayed the Lord?
2. How many times have we been unfaithful... left Him alone... put our interests before his?
3. How many times have we betrayed Jesus in one of our brothers or sisters... friends... companions?

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