

Tuesday of Holy Week

Gospel text (*Jn* 13,21-33.36-38): Reclining at table with his disciples, Jesus was deeply troubled and testified, “Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, at a loss as to whom he meant. One of his disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was reclining at Jesus’ side. So Simon Peter nodded to him to find out whom he meant. He leaned back against Jesus’ chest and said to him, “Master, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I hand the morsel after I have dipped it.” So he dipped the morsel and took it and handed it to Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot. After Judas took the morsel, Satan entered him. So Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” Now none of those reclining at table realized why he said this to him. Some thought that since Judas kept the money bag, Jesus had told him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or to give something to the poor. So Judas took the morsel and left at once. And it was night.

When he had left, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and he will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. You will look for me, and as I told the Jews, ‘Where I go you cannot come,’ so now I say it to you.”

Simon Peter said to him, “Master, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, though you will follow later.” Peter said to him, “Master, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Amen, amen, I say

to you, the cock will not crow before you deny me three times.”

«It was night»

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Today, Holy Tuesday, the liturgy emphasizes the scene about to be unleashed and that will end with the crucifixion on Good Friday. “So Judas took the morsel and left at once. And it was night” (Jn 13:30). It is always night when we move away from He who is “Light from Light, true God from true God” (Symbol of Faith: Nicene Creed).

The sinner is the one who turns his back on the Lord to gravitate around the created things, without referring them to its Creator. St. Augustine describes sin as “a love of self to the point of despising God.” That is, a betrayal. A prevarication that is the fruit of “the arrogance which makes us want to be liberated from God and left alone to ourselves, the arrogance which makes us think that we do not need his eternal love, but can be the masters of our own lives” (Benedict XVI). We may understand that Jesus felt that night “deeply troubled” (Jn 13:21).

Fortunately, sin is not the last word; the last word is God's mercy. This means, however, a “change” on our part; a reverse of the situation consisting in detach from creatures to become attached to God and find again the true freedom. Nevertheless, to change to God we should not wait to become sick of the false freedom we have been using. In words of the Jesuit Louis Bourdaloue, “we would like to convert when we would get tired of this world or, rather, when the world would get tired of us.” We should know better than that. Let us make up our mind right now. Easter time is the adequate time. In the Cross, Christ opens his arms wide to all of us, nobody is excluded. Every repented thief has his place in Paradise. On condition, however, to change his life and remedy his shortcomings, like the thief in the Gospel: “And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal” (Lk 23:41).

«Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him»

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Today, we are given to contemplate Jesus in the darkness of His Passion days. Darkness that will be over when He will exclaim: «It is finished» (Jn 19:30); as of that moment, Easter's light will flare up. In Easter's glowing night—in opposition to the darkness of the vigil of his death— Jesus' words will become true: «Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him» (Jn 13:31). We can indeed say that each step Jesus takes is a step from death to Life and it has a Paschal character, expressed by an attitude of total obedience to the Father: «I have come to do your will» (Heb 10:9); attitude corroborated by words, gestures and deeds which are opening the way to his glorification as the Son of God.

Today, we also contemplate the person of Judas, the traitor apostle. And his heart, full of evil intentions he is seeking to dissimulate; hypocritically, he is also trying to cover up the greediness that rules and blinds him, despite he is so close to him, who is the Light of the world. In spite of being surrounded by Light and exemplar unselfishness, for Judas «it was night» (Jn 13:30): thirty silver coins, «the devil's excrement»—as Papini qualified money— have dazzled and gagged him. Dominated by avidity, he betrays and sells Jesus, the most honored amongst honored men; but Judas experienced despair too, for money is not everything and it can definitely enslave us.

Finally, we consider Peter with attention and devotion. Everything in him is good will, love, generosity, simplicity, nobility... He is Judas' counterpoint. It is true that three times Peter denied Jesus, but his intentions were not mean; he just did it out of cowardice and human feebleness. «He denied him for the third time, and when Jesus Christ looks at him, he immediately cried, and bitterly he cried» (Saint Ambrose). Peter's remorse and repentance was sincere as shown by his excruciating pain full of love. This is why, Jesus afterwards, reaffirmed him in the vocation and in the mission He had prepared for him.