Wednesday of Holy Week

Gospel text (*Mt* 26:14-25): One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, “Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?” He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, ‘The teacher says, “My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.”’” The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover.

When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, “Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, “Surely it is not I, Lord?” He said in reply, “He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born.” Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” He answered, “You have said so.”

“Surely it is not I?”

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Today the Gospel presents us with three scenes: the betrayal of Judas, the preparations to celebrate the Passover, and the Supper with the Twelve.

The word “to hand over” (“paradidōmi” in Greek) is repeated six times and serves as the link among these three moments: (i) when Judas hands Jesus over; (ii) the Passover, which is a figure of the sacrifice of the Cross, where Jesus hands over His life; and (iii) the Last Supper, in which the self-giving of Jesus is revealed, a self-giving that will be fulfilled on the Cross.

Let us pause here at the Passover Supper, where Jesus Christ makes known that His Body will be given up

and His Blood poured out. His words, “Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me” (Mt 26:20), invite each of the Twelve—and in a particular way Judas—to an examination of conscience. These words extend to all of us, who have also been called by Jesus. They are an invitation to reflect on our actions, whether good or bad; on our dignity; to ask ourselves what we are doing at this moment with our lives; where we are going and how we have responded to the call of Jesus. We must answer with sincerity, humility, and honesty.

Let us remember that we can hide our sins from other people, but we cannot hide them from God, who sees in secret. Jesus, true God and true man, sees and knows all things. He knows what is in our hearts and what we are capable of. Nothing is hidden from His eyes. Let us avoid deceiving ourselves; and only after we have been truthful with ourselves should we look at Christ and ask Him, “Surely it is not I?” (Mt 26:22). Let us keep in mind what Pope Francis said: “Jesus, loving us, invites us to be reconciled with God and to return to Him, in order to find ourselves again.”

Let us look to Jesus, listen to His words, and ask for the grace to give ourselves by uniting ourselves to His sacrifice on the Cross.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Blessed be thou, my Lord Jesus Christ, who didst foretell thy death before the time, and in the last supper didst wonderfully consecrate thy precious body of material bread, and also charitably gave it to thy Apostles, in memory of thy most worthy passion, and by washing their feet with thy sacred and precious hand, didst humbly show thy very great humility.” (Saint Bridget)

- “What we shall be commemorating in the coming days is the supreme battle between Light and Darkness. We must also put ourselves in this context aware of our own ‘night’, of our sins and our responsibility if we want to benefit spiritually from the Paschal Mystery.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Jesus chose the time of Passover to fulfill what he had announced at Capernaum: giving his disciples his Body and his Blood.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 1339)

Other comments

“Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”

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Today, the Gospel proposes us —at least— three considerations. The first one is that, when our love for God cools off, then our will yields to other temptations, where voluptuousness seems to offer us more tasty dishes while, in fact, they are prepared with degrading and disturbing poisons. Given our congenital fragility, we should not allow the fire of our fervor to cool down, fervor which if not sensibly, at least mentally, links us to him, who has loved us to the point of giving his life for us.

The second consideration refers to the mysterious election of the place where Jesus wants to celebrate His Paschal Supper. «Go into the city, to the house of a certain man, and tell him: “The teacher says, ‘My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.’” (Mt 26:18). Maybe, the master of the house was not one of our Lord's confirmed friends, but he must have had a very good ear to be able to listen to his “inside” calls. Our Lord would have spoken to him intimately —as He so often does with us—, throughout a thousand incentives, so that he would open his door. His imagination and omnipotence, which support his infinite love for us, have no limits and express themselves in ways always apt to every personal situation. When we hear his call we have to “surrender”, by leaving aside all sophisms and by happily accepting this “liberator messenger”. It is just as if someone would come to our prison door and would invite us, as the Angel did with Peter, by saying: “Get up quickly.” (Acts 12:7).

The traitor who is trying to conceal his crime before the Omniscient keen stare offers the third motive of meditation to us. Adam had already tried it, and later on, Cain his son, too, but both to no avail. Before becoming our most exacting Judge, God appears before us as a father and a mother, who do not surrender to the idea of losing their son. Jesus' heart suffers not so much because of the betrayal as it does with the realization that a son is irretrievably going astray from him.