

Wednesday of Holy Week

Principal Service readings

Isaiah 50.4-9a	Third song of the servant of the Lord
Psalms 70	Prayer of trust in time of need
Hebrews 12.1-3	Persevere in running the race before us
John 13.21-32	The treachery of Judas foretold

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The treachery of Judas foretold

²¹Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, ‘Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.’ ²²The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. ²³One of his disciples – the one whom Jesus loved – was reclining next to him; ²⁴Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ ²⁶Jesus answered, ‘It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.’ So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘Do quickly what you are going to do.’ ²⁸Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, ‘Buy what we need for the festival’; or, that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

³¹When he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.’

John 13.21–32 NRSV¹

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

What is it about a shared meal that is always so intimate? There is something relational about it, connectional. There has been a build up to this particular meal, which will turn out to be the last meal Jesus has with his disciples before his crucifixion. Jesus has already washed his disciples' feet (13.3-11), and we might have noted the troubling thoughts of Judas Iscariot (13.2). These come to a head when Jesus generously offers Judas a piece of bread. Judas takes the bread and then leaves: 'It was night', the narrator writes, ominously.

Did Judas have to betray Jesus? Well, somebody had to do it. But did he know what he was doing? Jesus seems to be the only one who knows what is going on. Simon Peter shows his ignorance again, Judas considers betrayal, the other disciples uncertainty and misunderstanding, but Jesus, although 'troubled in spirit' (v.21), shows knowledge and love in the situation. His deeper insight is expressed from v.31: 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified'.

Quotations

1

Peter denied Jesus; Judas betrayed Jesus. The bad news was that both of them fell off the track and were both filled with regrets, remorse and anguish for their mischievous behaviours. However it was only Peter who chose to rise again after falling! Judas chose to end it with suicide! If you fall, you can rise again!

The great hand book of quotes / Israelmore Ayivor. 2014

2

Judas became the spokesman of all those who through the centuries would protest the ornamentation of the Christian cult and would feel that, when the best of gold and jewels were given to the God who made them, there was some slight made to the poor – not because they were interested in the poor, but because they were envious of that wealth.

Life of Christ / Fulton J. Sheen, 1954

3

The bare knowledge of God's will is inefficacious, it doth not better the heart. Knowledge alone is like a winter sun, which hath no heat or influence; it doth not warm the affections, or purify the conscience.

2

Judas was a great luminary, he knew God's will, but he was a traitor.
Thomas Watson. 1620–1686

Related topics

For further study:

Eucharist, paschal mystery

Closing Prayer

O God,
who through the only Saviour has made us your children:
suffer us not to conspire against our high calling in you,
lest we pass with Iscariot into endless night;
nor ever go away from the true light,
who alone has the words of eternal life,
the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

A procession of passion prayers / Eric Milner-White. 1951