

4.8.20

For the first two days of this week, Holy Week, our gospel selections for Mass were taken from John's Gospel, and both told of Jesus at dinner, first at the house of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, and second in Jerusalem itself on the Eve of Passover. Judas appeared in both readings. In the first one he complained about Mary's huge expenditure of money to buy the perfumed oil with which she anointed Jesus' feet; in the second he received the dipped morsel from the Lord's hands and then exited the gathering. And we were told that "it was night." Today's reading is Matthew's version of this second meal in which Judas begins his betrayal of Jesus. Matthew gives us details not found in John. He tells us that Judas' motive for betraying Jesus was money. But that information makes us recall what John had previously told us, namely, that Judas kept the purse for their group and complained about Mary's expenditure.

Oftentimes our view of things is determined by our occupation in life. If we are involved in finance, we see the world from that point of view. Judas was involved in money. He looked at reality from that perspective. Apparently, he now felt that it was time to look to his own future. Maybe he could see the writing on the wall with respect to Jesus. Despite the warm acceptance by the people in

Jerusalem, the authorities, the people that mattered, were not accepting Jesus' message. Judas may have felt that it was time to jump ship, for Jesus' ship was going down.

But we who look at Jesus as the Lord of life cannot imagine that Judas could have reduced his relationship to Jesus and Jesus' cause to a monetary level. We think of that line from Robert Bolt's play about St. Thomas More when More says to a man named Richard Rohr who was willing to betray More in order to receive a position in Wales: "For Wales, why Richard, it profit a man nothing to give his soul for the world . . . but for Wales!" Wales, it would seem, did not seem to be a great prize at that time. Yet it was enough to buy Rohr's treachery. And we, viewing Judas' treachery, cannot imagine that it could have been bought for thirty pieces of silver, no matter what that amount of silver was worth. The exchange itself is unimaginable. How can discipleship be reduced to that level! And yet, time and time again this has happened. People sell their friends out. People abandon the noblest of causes for money. No wonder our scriptures warn us that "the love of money is the root of all evils" (1 Timothy 6:10). Nevertheless, we stand speechless viewing the fact. The Lord of life is betrayed for money. Confronted with this sordid truth, we can only pray: "Lord, help us to see things truthfully. May we never confuse the value

and worth of our human relationships, our love, with the material needs of our lives! Amen.”