

The mystery of Judas Iscariot

Judas accompanied Our Lord in his public life, but in the end betrayed him. However, Benedict XVI said, "it is not for us to judge his gesture." In his address, the Pope explains how this apostle played a role in "God's mysterious plan of salvation".

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During general audience on Wednesday, October 18, Benedict XVI dedicated his remarks to the figure of

Judas Iscariot, and to his successor in the group of the twelve Apostles, Matthias. The audience was held in St. Peter's Square in the presence of more than 30,000 people.

"The name of Judas Iscariot," said the Pope, "always appears last in the lists of the Twelve ... [which also] recall the fact of his betrayal as having already been accomplished."

However, he added, the evangelists do emphasize Judas' status as an Apostle "to all effects."

"We ask ourselves why Jesus chose this man and put His trust in him. ... Even more uncertain is the mystery concerning his eternal fate."

However "it is not for us to judge his gesture, putting ourselves in the place of God, Who is infinitely merciful and just."

"Why did he betray Jesus?" the Holy Father asked. "Some people highlight the question of his greed for money.

Others favor a messianic explanation: Judas was disappointed to see that Jesus' plans did not include the political- military liberation of his country."

Benedict XVI pointed out how the evangelists explain Judas' betrayal "going beyond the historical reasons," and attributing it to "the personal responsibility of Judas who miserably submitted to a temptation of the Evil One. ... Jesus treated him like a friend but, in His invitations to follow Him, ... did not force people's will or protect them from the temptations of Satan, respecting human freedom. Truly, there are many ways in which the human heart can be perverted. The only way to obviate them is ... to be in full communion with Jesus."

Judas' repentance "degenerated into desperation and thus became self-destruction. For us, this is an

invitation never to despair of divine mercy."

Even Judas "negative role" is part of God's mysterious plan of salvation, said the Pope, explaining how "God takes Judas' inexcusable gesture as an occasion for the total donation of the Son for the redemption of the world." Judas was replaced by Matthias "of whom we know nothing more, save that he was a witness to the entire earthly teaching of Jesus, remaining faithful to Him unto the end," his election "almost compensating the betrayal. Here," said Pope Benedict, "is a final lesson: if even in the Church there is no lack of unworthy and false Christians, it is up to each of us to counterbalance the evil they commit with our own clear witness of Jesus Christ."

At the end of the audience, the Pope made reference to yesterday's accident on Rome's underground

railway system in which one person was killed and 236 were injured. "At this painful moment," he said, "I am especially close to those affected by this tragic event. To them I express my affection and give assurances of a special recollection in my prayers."

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