

Wednesday of Holy Week: Judas Betrays Jesus

The Prelate's Reflections on Wednesday in Holy Week, broadcast on EWTN world radio

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On Wednesday of Holy Week we recall the sad story of one who was an Apostle of Christ—Judas. St. Matthew relates it in his Gospel: “One of the twelve called Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests and

said to them: ‘How much are you willing to give me for delivering him to you?’ They assigned to him thirty pieces of silver. And from then on he sought out an opportunity to betray him.”

Why does the Church recall this event? So that we might realize that all of us are capable of behaving like Judas. And so that we might ask Our Lord to keep such treasonous rejections and defeats out of our lives, not only because of the negative consequences they would bring to us personally—which would be serious enough—but because we could occasion the loss of others, who need the help of our good example, our encouragement, our friendship.

There are places in Latin America where images of the Crucifix show a deep wound in Our Lord’s left cheek. They say that it represents the kiss of

Judas. So great is the pain our sins inflict on Jesus! Tell him that we all want to be faithful, that we do not want to sell him, as Judas did, for thirty coins, for a pittance—which is what our sins amount to: pride, envy, impurity, hatred, resentment. When a temptation threatens to throw us to the ground, let us consider that it isn't worthwhile to exchange the happiness of the children of God, whom we are, for a sinful pleasure that ends right away and leaves behind the bitter disgust of defeat and infidelity.

We have to feel the weight of the Church and of all mankind. Isn't it something stupendous to know that any of us can have an influence on the whole world? Right where we are, carrying out our tasks, caring for our families, serving our friends, we can help so many people be happy. As St. Josemaría Escrivá put it, by fulfilling our Christian duties, we

have to be “like a stone that falls into the lake: Through your word and example you produce a first ripple, and that one, another, and another, and still another,” until it reaches the distant shore.

Let us ask Our Lord to keep us from any more betrayals, to show us how to reject, with his grace, the temptations presented by the devil, who seeks to deceive us. We have to say No with determination to everything that could take us away from God. In this way, the disgraceful story of Judas will not be repeated in our lives.

If we should feel weak, let us run to the holy Sacrament of Penance! Like the father in the parable of the prodigal son, Our Lord is waiting for us there, ready to embrace us and extend to us his friendship. He is constantly going out to meet us, even when we’ve had a fall, even a hard

fall. It's always a good time to go back to God! We must not react with discouragement or pessimism. We must not think: What can I, a heap of miseries, do now? Much greater is God's mercy! What am I going to do if I fall again and again on account of my weakness? God's power to raise us from our falls is so great!

Great were the sins of Judas and of Peter. Those two betrayals of the Master—one surrendering him into the hands of his persecutors; the other denying Him three times—but how different was each one's reaction! Our Lord had torrents of mercy waiting for both of them. Peter repented, weeping for his sin, begging for pardon, and Christ confirmed him in faith and love. In time, he would give his life for Our Lord. Judas, however, failed to trust Christ's mercy. The gates to God's pardon were open to him until the

last moment, but he would not enter them by doing penance.

In his first encyclical, John Paul II spoke of Christ's "right to meet each one of us in that key moment of the soul's life, the moment of conversion and forgiveness" (*Redemptor Hominis*, 20). We must not deprive Jesus of that right! We must not deny God the Father the joy of welcoming us back! We must not sadden the Holy Spirit, who wants to restore supernatural life to souls!

Let us ask Mary, Hope of Christians, not to let our errors and sins dishearten us, even when they are repeated. Let us ask her to obtain from her Son the grace of conversion, the effective desire to go to Confession, humble and contrite, to receive the Sacrament of divine mercy and start over, and over again, as often as necessary.

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