

Tuesday's Gospel: Lesson of Supreme Love

Gospel for Tuesday in Holy Week, and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn* 13:21-33.36-38)

When Jesus had thus spoken, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus; so Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, “Tell us who it is of whom he speaks.” So lying thus, close to the breast of

Jesus, he said to him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give this morsel when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the money box, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast"; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified; if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to

you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow afterward." Peter said to him, "Lord, why cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the cock will not crow, till you have denied me three times."

Commentary

Already at the threshold of the Passion, the liturgy invites us to consider how far Christ's love for us reaches. Jesus has spoken repeatedly about this moment, although not even his closest disciples have been able to understand what he meant. But the apostle John has grasped the

meaning of these events in a very special way. The offering that our Lord is about to make is an offering of pure love for all men and women of all times, even for those who are ignorant of that love, for those who despise it, and for the one who is going to hand him over to death on the Cross. And through his self-giving, he will reveal to us the faithful love of God the Father for all mankind.

We see here Jesus' love for Judas, whom he tirelessly seeks to spur to convert. The one who will betray his Master takes part in the Last Supper, and is not excluded. What's more, Jesus himself offers him something to eat. Everything our Lord does is a call to his heart: an invitation to remember what he has experienced and to reflect on it. And also, not to despair when he realizes the outcome of his deeds. But Judas is lost; something inside him has

hardened. Something has clouded his mind and heart, and he is unable to realize what he is doing. We will come to know this later, when we read his conversation with those to whom he hands over Jesus (cf. *Mt* 27:3-10). But he despairs in the end. For no one despairs suddenly: that situation is reached after many previous decisions.

We also see Jesus' love for Peter, whose weakness is of another kind. Despite all the progress he has made, he still doesn't know himself. Jesus wants his humility to be strengthened in order to make him a firm foundation for his Church. He wants Peter to become more aware of his weakness and not be scandalized by it, so that he doesn't despair. For, as in that singular moment, life will continually bring us challenges that we can fail to meet. It is relatively easy to say that we will give our life for those we

love. But what will happen when the time comes actually to do so? Saint Paul says that it is God who works in us to will and to act (cf. *Phil 2:13*). Only to the extent that Christ reigns in our hearts will we be able to make our love a reality to the point of giving our own life for the one we love. The Passion is a supreme teaching that we approach with the hope of learning what love is and receiving the strength to be able to love in the same way.

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