

Thursday's Gospel: In God's Plans

Gospel for Thursday in the 4th
Week of Lent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn* 13:16-20)

When Jesus finished washing the feet
of his disciples he said to them:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is
not greater than his master; nor is he
who is sent greater than he who sent
him. If you know these things,
blessed are you if you do them. I am
not speaking of you all; I know whom
I have chosen; it is that the scripture
may be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my
bread has lifted his heel against me.’

I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives anyone whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me.”

Commentary

“He who are my bread has lifted his heel against me.” Jesus warns his apostles that a close friend – it can only be one of them – will betray him. But this unexpected shock shouldn’t cause them to become afraid. This betrayal, when it occurs, will be a sign to them to “believe that I am he” (who I say I am). Thus it will strengthen the apostles’ faith. He asks them to hold fast to their faith in Him as the Son of God, even when they see Him crucified on the Cross.

We know that the apostles will flee. But they would have remembered our Lord's warning, and although deeply shaken, they gathered again as a group at the moment of the Resurrection.

In life we encounter many unpleasant surprises, and we can even undergo a setback that seems disastrous to us. But this should never disconcert us. "A servant is not great than his master," Jesus tells us. So we too will encounter the Cross. But each time the Cross appears in our lives, we should remember our Lord's words here and reaffirm our faith as his disciples. Even being betrayed by others can be an opportunity to identify ourselves with Him.

Right before this episode, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, a job only servants were expected to perform. He also told the apostles

that they must always serve one another as they had seen him do. We can imagine Jesus kneeling and respectfully taking hold of the heel of Judas's foot to wash it. Then the words of the Psalm quoted by our Lord, "he who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me" (cf. *Ps* 41:9), take on a much fuller and more immediate meaning. It is another proof and reminder that nothing is left out of God's plans. Jesus knew from the beginning what was going to happen, and that it was for the accomplishment of our salvation. No matter what happens in our lives, we can be sure that God will use everything for the good of those who love him (cf. *Rom* 8:28).

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