

Spy Wednesday 2017

Today ends our official observance of Lent. Tomorrow we begin the most sacred time we call the Triduum – the solemn and holiest days of the Christian religion. During these forty days we pray that we have endeavored to open ourselves to God's graces and reflect more on the sacrifice made by Christ for our salvation. Some days we have been more faithful than others. All our preparation and reflection constitute the necessary ground work for entering into the mystery that is about to unfold tomorrow.

The Gospel setting from Matthew is the Passover – a very solemn feast for the Jews then and to this very day as they remember their freedom gained crossing the Red Sea escaping the slavery in Egypt. In fact, we are in the period of the Jewish Passover which began this past Monday evening,

In the Gospel today we sadly learn of the betrayal plans of Judas. The Gospel goes on to tell us of the preparations for the Passover meal. The table has been set, the meal prepared. Everyone sits at the table – everyone, - the pure as well as the impure – from the loving Apostle John to the sinner, Judas. We hear Jesus speak of his impending death and while they are eating Jesus says, "Amen I say to you, one of you will betray me." Can you imagine what a shock this was to the disciples! He had predicted several times before how he was to die, and if you recall, they really didn't want to hear about it and so kind of glossed over it. So Jesus is now saying to them one of you will betray me. The disciples, one after the other inquire of Jesus, "Surely, it is not I, Lord?" These disciples who have journeyed with Jesus, the Messiah, for almost three years must have felt very vulnerable and been full of self-doubt to even ask such a question.

Because the Gospel today lets us know of Judas secret visit to the chief priests planning to betray Jesus, how appropriate then that this day is sometimes called, "*Spy Wednesday*." We have come now to that part of Jesus' life where we see at work the powers of good and evil. As this Gospel ends, Judas also asks Jesus, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" and all Jesus answered was, "You have said so." What is so significant about this, "Spy Wednesday" is that it theologically reflects the daily struggles we ourselves endure in order to be in relationship with

the Jesus. To live the life that Jesus intended for us is a perpetual struggle with good and evil on a daily basis. Some days we are better at it than others. In this Gospel Jesus shares a piece of food with Judas, simultaneously dipping a morsel into the bowl. We should remember that the act of sharing a meal with others is deeply rooted in the Semite notion of intimacy and close relationship. Jesus is sharing the meal, not with strangers, but with intimate friends.

Judas has turned on Jesus' friendship and love and Jesus is not blind to this. We too in our lives are sometimes turned against Jesus' love through our unloving and offensive activities. There is a real message here in Jesus' tranquil resignation to the events that are coming – his Faith in the love and power of God.

From the beginning of his public ministry, the disciples have been at his side. They have learned from him, traveled with him, ministered with him, been his earthly companions, and comforted him as he walked this otherwise lonely road to Jerusalem. But now, as Jesus's hour comes, he must bear this burden alone. This will not be a team effort. Jesus goes forward unaccompanied, as even as his friends betray him, deny him, and disperse. As theologian Donald Macleod observes, "Had the redemption of the world depended on the diligence of the disciples (or even their staying awake) it would never have been accomplished" (*The Person of Christ*, 173).

We need to examine our lives and look for the moments that we have been insincere with our loving God and others - more precisely, our "communion" with God lived out in our communion with others in our lives. With Judas' false questioning response to Jesus, he reveals his true self. **A Betrayer.** Jesus sees right through Judas' false piety and friendship. Jesus sees right through our own appearances when we falsely present ourselves as holy and faithful followers. Sometimes we fail. Sometimes we're lost. Sometimes we're humiliated. Sometimes we're misunderstood. Then, valor lies in simply being willing to begin again.

We must take heart! Our loving and merciful God knows that we have good intentions and understands our human weaknesses and shortcomings. God wants us to succeed so we must never stop trying. The best definition I ever heard of success is getting up one more time than you fall down!! Energizer batteries used to have a commercial that said the energizer bunny just keeps going and going and going. Jesus is saying to you and me, "just keep going and going and going."