

22. February 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“The Traitor's Name”

Jn 13:12-30

When Jesus had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 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 any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me.”

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.

In all that He says and does, Jesus serves as an unsurpassed example to us. His washing of feet as Lord and Master becomes a model for His disciples of how they are to serve one another in His Spirit. This same standard also applies to all subsequent disciples of the Lord, who down through the centuries are sent by Him to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Their attitude must be imbued with the spirit of charity, as they saw it in their Lord and Master.

Today's passage leads us to the tragic event of Judas' betrayal. Like the other disciples, he too was chosen by Jesus. Nevertheless, the Scripture was fulfilled in him: *'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me'*.

In meditating on this passage, some wonder whether Judas was, as it were, obliged to act in this way in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. A few days ago we had already addressed the very necessary distinction between God's active will and what He allows to happen. Judas did not have to betray the Lord, as if he had no other choice. He did it for nefarious motives. Scripture had simply predicted that one of His disciples would betray Him.

Jesus brings His faithful disciples into the mystery of His love and binds them to Himself to the extent that He will be present to them when He sends them in His Name. Those who receive them will be blessed, for they will receive Jesus through them, and whoever receives Jesus receives the Heavenly Father who sent Him. This remains true to this day, as long as His disciples remain faithful to their Master and His teachings.

In the circle of His disciples, Jesus openly states that one of them would betray Him. What a commotion this statement must have caused among them! They had left everything to follow Jesus, they had lived with Him, served His mission and witnessed His signs and miracles. Surely it was unimaginable to them that one would betray their Lord and they did not know to whom He was referring. It must have been an unbearable situation for them! But, at Peter's request, John, the disciple whom Jesus especially loved, asked Him who the betrayer was. Jesus replied, *"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."

What a chilling scene! What had been hidden until then becomes clear. Indeed, it was Judas who would betray the Lord and whose memory remains, to this day, a warning to all who love Jesus, never to stray and to fight with all their might not to betray Him too.

Jesus said to Judas, 'Whatever you are going to do, do it quickly.' Once he had taken the morsel that Jesus gave him, Judas went out at once, as the Gospel says.

The decision was made. There was no turning back for Judas. It is significant that the passage chosen for today ends by saying, *'It was night.'*

It was the night of betrayal of God. The inconceivable, the horrific, the dark and demonic, evil itself seemed to overcome the light. Only God could pierce this night and snatch victory from the shadows in the midst of the thickest darkness through the greatest act of love.