



27. March 2026
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT
Day 38: “Conspiracy against Jesus”

Holy Week is just around the corner, and today’s Lenten reading presents us with the Gospel passage in which Jesus’ enemies decide to kill Him (Jn 11:47–54). It reads as follows:

“So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, ‘What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.’” (vv. 47–48).

Here we see the false pretexts they put forward, for Jesus—through His preaching and His works—posed absolutely no threat to the Romans. In reality, it was the religious leaders who felt threatened and feared losing their influence over the people.

The raising of Lazarus, an unmistakable sign of Jesus’ divine authority, proved intolerable to them. Since they had no way to refute Him or accuse Him of any sin—and thus of having transgressed the Law—they simply decided to kill Him.

Caiaphas, the high priest that year, was at the head of the Sanhedrin. He uttered the prophetic words that it was better for one man to die for the people than for the whole people to perish (vv. 49–50). The evangelist emphasizes that he did not speak these words of his own accord, but that they were a prophetic inspiration by virtue of his ministry as high priest (v. 51). Thus, he foretold the highest purpose of Jesus’ death, which these very religious authorities would later instigate before the Roman procurator. What a tragic situation!

God attests to His Son—whom He has sent into the world—with undeniable signs and miracles, yet those who presided over the people in God’s name commit the worst crime one can imagine: they become responsible for the death of Jesus, who came to redeem humanity and lead it back to the house of the Heavenly Father.

As believers, we know that the Son of God voluntarily took upon Himself this atoning death. Thus, not only the children of Israel would receive salvation, for—as the Gospel says—Jesus was to die *“not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad”* (v. 52).

By commission of the Risen Lord, the Gospel will be carried to the ends of the earth. All peoples and nations are invited to be reconciled with God through the death and resurrection of Christ and to receive eternal life in Him. God accepted the death of His beloved Son as an atoning sacrifice and grants salvation to all who believe in Him. What grace!

On the other hand, what a tragedy the treatment Jesus received from the religious authorities of His day was! How much blindness and wickedness is evident! The rejection of Jesus had now turned into active persecution. They directly threatened Him with death.

The obstinacy of the religious leaders could no longer be dispelled. Their blindness regarding Jesus grew with every word and deed He performed.

This is the consequence of closing oneself off to the truth. Blindness can even become “voluntary blindness,” which increasingly darkens a person to the point where they no longer even want to know the truth. Once this point is reached, the hardening is complete, and there is no way out of this state unless God delivers the person through a special grace.

The problem of “willful blindness” has serious consequences. It can reach the extreme of refusing to see the truth and to be instructed by it. In this way, in the long run, one becomes immersed in a “self-designed truth” and remains trapped within it. This is particularly evident in the case of the Pharisees, who spoke of a supposed danger that Jesus posed to the entire people of Israel in relation to the Romans. It is as if they resorted to their own deception to justify their evil deeds. Unfortunately, this is a common way of proceeding among all kinds of authorities, who fall into certain deceptions and then allow themselves to be guided by them—by their own ideas and invented pretexts—rather than by objective reality.

In this context, I would like to reemphasize the importance of adhering firmly and unconditionally to the authentic doctrine of the Church and the message of the Gospel. From there, we receive the guidelines for applying the doctrine pastorally in specific cases. On the other hand, if we cease to be guided by objective truth, we will begin to rely on our own human conceptions and desires, and we will fall into a blindness that will spread.

Jesus, for His part, withdraws with the disciples to the city of Ephraim, near the desert. Following the Sanhedrin’s decision to put Him to death, the Lord no longer appears in

public among the Jews until the hour comes.

But His hour is already very near! The Lord has little time left before drinking the cup to the last drop. Knowing what awaits Him, Jesus will consciously go up to Jerusalem to meet “His hour”: that hour of supreme darkness that God will turn into the brightest light.

The essence of today’s meditation is to live in the truth and not let ourselves be blinded.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/god-sees-the-bowels-and-the-heart/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/ways-to-recognize-jesus/>