

Judas

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In the past few years in the Church we have had many psychological and sociological studies, all attempting to explain why some priests have left their sacred calling. I presume they have some value but it is interesting that none of them thought of making a biblical study of why a priest leaves. Perhaps we could find much if we peruse the Gospels and studied Judas.

His name was Iscariot; no one knows exactly what that meant. Maybe it was Sicarius, in the Greek, a dagger bearer. In this case he would have been classified as a revolutionist bent on driving the Romans out of the land of Israel. But in any case; one day a babe was born in Keriioth, a child of promise. Friends brought gifts to the parents and time went on and that babe of Keriioth grew in age and he met a babe who was born in Bethlehem who had grown in age and grace and wisdom, and at the parting of the waters, Christ chose Judas to be an Apostle. He did not choose him to be a traitor, but to be an Apostle.

Almost all studies that have been made seriously of Judas say that the principal reason that he left is because he was avaricious. There is indeed some Gospel evidence for this. For, just a week before the Passion of our Blessed Lord, the Savior was invited into the house of Simon, the Pharisee, and what the host saw brought a blush to his cheek. He looked up and saw a woman who was an intruder. Outside, friends could come and stand along the wall and listen to a conversation at table. This woman however, annoyed him to some extent. He would not have minded it if anyone else had been there; but the Rabbi, what would he think of it.

She was a woman, a sinner. Her hair was long and she did not attempt to brush it back. As she came toward the table, and in those days everyone reclined at table on the left arm leaving the right arm free to eat, she came and stood over the feet of our Blessed Lord and let fall upon the sandaled harbingers of peace, a few tears like the first warm drops of a summer rain. Then ashamed of what she had done, she attempted to wipe away the tears with her hair. All the while Simon was thinking to himself, "If He only knew what kind of a woman she is."

How did he know?

She took from about her neck, a small vessel. In those days women carried precious perfume about the neck in a bottle and when they attended funeral rites, they would break the bottle over the remains and then after allowing the perfume to fall upon the corpse, they would throw even the remains of the bottle onto the body. And she releases from her neck, this vessel of precious ointment but does not do what you and I do, pour it out gently drop-by-drop by drop, as if to indicate by the slowness of our giving, the generosity of our gift. She broke the vessel... gave everything. For love knows no limits.

Judas all the while got a whiff of this perfume. Oscar Wilde describes a syniac as one who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. And he immediately fixed a price, three hundred days wages. This perfume let me tell you, was no ordinary smell #5. So Judas now becomes the defender of the social order. He breaks up the routine of the dinner by saying,

The Lord is arrested, led over the brook of Kedron; a story we will tell about in the last Holy Hour. And Judas had found his Lord because the Gospel tells us that our Lord was often accustomed to go there to pray. Only those who have been cradled in the sacred association of the Church know how to betray. Judas knew where to find the Lord after dark, and in all the great apocalyptic literature, Robert Hugh Benson, Soloviev, and Doesteovsky. The betrayal of Christ in His Church is always From within, not from without. In Benson, it was a Cardinal, in Doesteovsky it was a Cardinal, and in Soloviev it was a Cardinal. The title means nothing but the fact is, he was a priest. These writers made the priest one who had been at the top.

Who will ever forget Doesteovsky's description of Christ coming to the city of Seville in about the 16th Century? The Grand Inquisitor is a wisened old Cardinal over ninety years of age. And when our Blessed Lord returns he sees a child being brought into a Church. He raises the child to life and the Grand Inquisitor reminds Him that He came to bring freedom but people did not want to be free. They really want to be slaves of something. And he said, "Tomorrow we will burn You. Leave and never come back." And our Lord bent over and kissed the whitened cheeks of the old cardinal and for the first time in many years blood came to his cheeks. And once again he said, "Never again come back."

Is it any wonder then that St. Peter along with Ezekiel in the Old Testament speak of the destruction of the Temple and the persecution of the Church is coming from within. Ezekiel said, "Incipite a sanctuario meo," and St. Peter; "Begin at my sanctuary." Begin there in the sanctuary, and that was what was first destroyed when Titus and Vespasian took over Jerusalem. And Peter said that's the way it will be at the end.

Judas now has his money but not very much, \$17.40. Divinity is always betrayed out of all proportion to its due worth, always a ridiculous figure. So when a man gives up his priesthood what does he get? He gets \$500.00 in royalties for a book attacking the Church, an hour on television to make light of it and celibacy. Three thousand nights in bed and he is sick of it all. Judas was sick of it all, took back his thirty pieces of silver and sent them rolling across the temple floor and he said, "Look, you do it." All that it was fit for was to buy a field of blood. And he might have, if he had just a spark of faith, have received pardon and forgiveness from the Lord, Who would forgive such betrayals seventy times seven.

It is interesting to make a comparison of Peter and Judas. Our Lord warned both that they would fail. They both failed, they both denied or betrayed the Lord and they both repented. But the difference in the word repent is that Judas repented unto himself and Peter repented unto the Lord. They were the same up to that point. St. Paul therefore says there are two kinds of sorrow, the sorrow of the world and the sorrow of true faith. So Judas no longer has any hope having refused to return to the Savior and he takes a rope and goes out to some rocky ground, we know not where it was.

I wonder, maybe...and here I am only speculating, up to this point I have used the Gospel. After Good Friday did he throw the rope over one of the beams of the Cross? We know he fell from the rocks and was burst asunder. That we do not know; it is mere speculation. That speculation was confirmed a few years ago when the cook of one of our bishops in China, who had been with him

for about twenty five years, When the Communists came in the cook sold out to the Communists and became a sheriff and, he became the sheriff prisoner of the bishop and the bishop died on the death march. The cook, in remorse went to the Chapel of the Bishop and threw a rope over the rafter and hanged himself. He went back as it were, to the scene of his crime.

Leaving aside this speculation because that is all it is, Judas now is full of despair and he walks over the rocky ground and each rock seem just as hard and cruel as his own heart. The limb of every tree seemed like a pointing finger, "Traitor, traitor, traitor!" The knot on every tree seemed like an accusing eye. And he hanged himself and as the Acts of the Apostles tells us, his bowels burst asunder. "And he went to his own place." That is all... his own place. Everything has its own place. You open the cage of a bird and the bird goes to its own place. You drop a stone from the hand and the stone goes to its own place. We do not know what this propriam locum was of Judas but we do know the reason of the fall and may that reason sharpen the resolution of our will so that we will not fail the Eucharist. If we could read the hearts of those who have left, faith broke, it snapped somewhere making light of the Eucharist, anything at all but no longer the sense of the invisible and the beautiful presence of Christ.

And the great tragedy of the life of Judas, one of the twelve, is that he might have been Saint Judas.

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Pamphlet 279

“Why wasn’t this sold; sold for three hundred pennies worth and given to the poor?”

The poor! I can imagine that he probably went on and argued in some such way as this,

“I heard you on the mount of the Beatitudes say, Blessed are the poor. Where is your love for the poor now? Have you forgotten all those fishermen sheks that are laying in the Sea of Galilee? Remember all those huts that were hugging the highway between Jerusalem and Jericho; are you mindful of those? Have you forgotten the inner city of Jerusalem; it’s slums? Where is Your love of the poor?”

The Lord answered,

“The poor you have always with you; Me, you will have not always; and what this good woman has done was done for My burial and it will be told about her around the world.”

Here is another instance of an emphasis on social justice when there is a forgetfulness of individual justice.

A bishop, one day came to me with a letter written by a priest in his office. It was two or three pages long, single space. A very vicious attack on the bishop because he had no interest in ecumenism; particularly because he had no concern for the poor. Well, I knew that the bishop did have concern for the poor, ecumenism as well. And I said to him,

“Why don’t you find out how much he stole?”

Actually he stole over \$25,000.00 from the chancery and then stole a wife who was a mother of four children. It was the story of Judas lived all over again.

So, the argument that Judas fell because he was avaricious does seem to have some substance. But...does avaricious really make a priest fall? As a matter of fact, in the history of the Church avaricious men have stayed in. Sometimes the Church can be a comfortable haven for the avarice. Furthermore, avarice is an old man’s sin; sin of youth is lust and middle age, power. Old age avarice, for it is a kind of economic immortality. See how well I have provided for myself. And, Judas was not an old man. Avarice therefore, cannot have been the cause of his leaving. What then was the cause?

Can you think of the first time that the fall of Judas is mentioned in the Gospels; the very first time? If you can recall that moment then you can have the answer to why there is a break in the priesthood. Where is the first mention of the fall of Judas? The day our Lord announced the Eucharist! When did Judas leave? The night our Lord gave the Eucharist! He broke at the announcement of the Eucharist; as a matter of fact, that was a critical moment in the life of our Blessed Lord. When He announced the Eucharist He lost the masses because He refused to be a bread King. Secondly, He lost some of his disciples; they left him and walked no more. Finally He split His Apostolic band. And here is the end of the story in the announcement of the Eucharist.

Conclusion of the 6th chapter of John,

And when the disciples withdrew and no longer went about with Him, Jesus asked the twelve,

“Do you also want to leave me?”

Simon Peter answered,

“Lord to whom shall we go? Your words are the words of Eternal Life. We have faith and we know that you are the Holy One of God.” And Jesus answered, “Have I not chosen you? All twelve? Yet, one of you is a devil!” He meant Judas, the son of

Simon Iscariot. He it was who would betray Him and he was one of the twelve.

When do priests begin to break? When they lose their faith in the Eucharist! It is not seen, it is not commented upon, a dozen other explanations will be given and the faith is generally lost long before others see the loss. There is predictability about those who leave the priesthood as is evident from this 6th chapter of John.

Our Blessed Lord had to live with this man for two years yet; think of it! He did not say who the devil was, He merely said, “One of you is the devil.” John, later on of course wrote the name. Now you know why we have centered this retreat on the Eucharist. There has never yet been a priest, who daily kept his faith in the Eucharist by watching an hour with the Lord who ever left him; no priest ever will! And those who are thinking of leaving... and I have many such letters in my possession about such men, from such men, who have come back because they restored their faith in the Eucharist.

So, this is the beginning of the break but they stay in. As I told you Demas left, he went back to the world as Paul simply put it, but others will destroy from within. A young priest told me within six months after his ordination, “I was ordained to try to destroy the Church from within.” If they would only leave, but they stay.

Now we come to the Last Supper and Judas leaves the priesthood. The seating arrangement of the table was one in which certainly John sat at the right. Who sat at the left? Judas! Now I will prove this to you. In the painting of Leonardo Divinci, Judas is down the table, I think about the fourth and upsetting the salt. And from that time on it became bad luck to upset the salt. He was holding his money bag but I think Our Lord always anxious to save us said to him, “Here Judas, sit near Me.” Where was Peter? On the other side of John.

Our Blessed Lord now washes the feet of His disciples. There are seven gestures mentioned; I think it is the beginning of the 13th chapter of John. As Our Lord washes the feet during supper, Jesus was well aware that the Father had entrusted everything to Him and that He had come from God and was going back to God. Now get the picture of the Incarnation here, (rose from the table as if God the Son was now prepared for the Incarnation), laid aside His garments, (the glory of His Divinity,) taking a towel which is the mark of a servant, a slave, (tying humanity about Himself, tied it round Him,) poured water into a basin, (poured out His blood,) washed His disciples feet, (cleansed us,) wiped them with a towel, (the purification of the spirit). It is interesting to compare this passage with the second chapter of Philippians, verse 6 which was a hymn in the Church, verse 6 and on in Philippians.

And Our Blessed Lord, after washing the feet of His disciples said, “You are clean, but not all. One of you is about to betray Me.” Ten said, “Is it I Lord?” In the Face of Divinity no one can be sure of his innocence. One said, “Who is it Lord?” We will come back to that later on. And one said, “Who is it Master.” St. Paul tell us that it is only by the Spirit that we can call Jesus, Lord. Eleven called Him Lord, one, Master. Now at this particular time there was whispering going on and you will understand why the seating arrangement was as it is here described.

When Our Lord said, “One of you is about to betray me, Peter always curious and inquisitive had to be in on everything; he just couldn’t bear the suspense. If he were seated next to our Lord,

you may be sure that Peter would have said. “Who is it Lord?” But Peter, says the Gospel, turns to John and said, “Ask Him who it is?” He asked John to ask and John said, “Who is it Lord, who is it?” And the Lord said, “It is he to whom I will reach this bread after I have dipped it in the sauce.” That is the way toasts were paid in those days; the bread was dipped in the sauce and given to a friend, the assumption being that they who ate the same bread were one body. Our Blessed Lord at that dipped the bread and gave it to Judas and said, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” Then Satan entered into Judas and the Gospel says, “And Judas went out and it was night.” It is always night when we leave the Lord.

None of the other Apostles at table knew what was happening because the Gospel tell us that they thought Judas had gone out either to buy food for the Passover or else to give money to the poor. In other words, do not expect that anyone who is satanic looks satanic. You would never think that anyone who is going out to conduct the Liturgy, to prepare the Liturgy, was satanic. You wouldn’t think that anyone who was going out to distribute alms was satanic, but Satan was in him. Then it is after he leaves that our Blessed Lord pronounces that word “now”. “Now Father, glorify Thy Son with the glory that I had with thee before the foundation of the world was laid.”

The Lord now prepares to go down to the garden; there is only one recorded time in the life of our Blessed Lord that He ever sang and that was the night He went out to His death! They go into the garden, He thought He could depend on three, Peter, James and John; John rather loving, Peter loyal in an intense kind of way, James ready always to follow leadership, but He told them to watch and pray. “Watch!” (Look out for the external environment...that is your horizontal problem.) “Pray!”...(Vertical attachment to Heaven.) And they slept! Men who are worried do not sleep, but they slept. Three times our Blessed Lord came back to them and said, “Can you not stay awake one hour with Me?”

Now on the hill opposite the garden one can catch the sight of lanterns and a group of men, the Greek word that is used, spira, would rather suggest that there were about two hundred in this army of Judas. It is a full moon, very easy to distinguish anyone. Further more, our Lord was well known in Jerusalem, everyone saw him, at least on Palm Sunday. And as Judas leads his band of ruffians down the hill he says, “I will give you a sign, a sign. He whom I shall kiss, that is He. Lay hold of Him.” Why did he have to give a sign, a kiss? Somehow or another when we leave the Lord we never understand Him, we forget His Divinity, we forget His wisdom and we forget His love. And Judas thought our Blessed Lord, coward that He was, would run back into the olive grove hiding in the dark. And so he would have to flush Him out and in the darkness he would give them a sign, he would kiss Him. And our Lord comes forward, “Who do you seek?” ‘Jesus of Nazareth!’ “I AM!” (Exodus) And they all fall backwards until He gives them strength to stand.

And Judas then throws his arms around the neck of our Blessed Lord and blisters His lips with a kiss. And the original word that is used in the Gospel is means he smothered Him with kisses. (So, books are written; I love the Church BUT!) “Hail, Rabbi,” and then he kissed Him. Why the kiss? Because Divinity is so sacred that its betrayal must always be prefaced by some mark of affection and esteem.