

LENTEN PROGRAMME
“Holy Week Voices from the Holy Land”
Week 1, 2021 – Mark 3. 13-19
Escaping Responsibility - Judas

GATHERING

OPENING PRAYER:

Almighty everliving God, grant us so to celebrate the mysteries of our Lord’s Passion that we may merit to receive your pardon. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and every. Amen.

PRAYING THE SCRIPTURES

[Mark 3. 13-19]

Jesus went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

[See: Luke 22. 1-6, 19-23, 47-48 and John 13. 21-30]

Poem: Judas

I was always the odd one out
of the twelve - the last to be called
and usually the first to doubt
the only one from the South
the political one, the agitator
responsible for the common purse
the entrusted treasurer
but rarely asked to preach or heal.

Yes, it is true, I have taken money
from the large offerings sometimes given
but never for my own riotous living
instead for the cause
preparations for rebellion
the weapons and provisions.....

Please take a few moments in silence to reflect on these passages.

LISTEN TO EXPERIENCE [Husam Wahhab]

When I read Fr Richard's moving poem about Judas, I wondered why I was allocated that poem?! Am I a traitor?!! I learnt that Judas was given the task of 'administration' - the treasurer, not the more glamorous tasks of healing and preaching. Treasurer/accountant - there is my first connection: As an accountant, I am the treasurer! I believe in the importance of that role and the roles of everyone else, whether a tour guide, a restaurant owner, a priest, an olive wood carver or someone working in a factory. We need each other and we need each person do their job well, honestly and with integrity.

I also learnt that perhaps Judas felt that he was the outsider among the other disciples, and was probably the last disciple to have been chosen by Jesus. So Judas felt he was a victim. Both as Palestinians and as a Christian minority, we can feel victimised but we should be privileged to live in the 'Land of the Holy One'. Why should we feel we are outsiders when Bethlehem and Jerusalem are at the heart of the Mother Church?

Behind his outward loyalty, there was deep resentment in Judas' heart - towards Jesus, the other disciples and life in general. Loyalty is something about which I feel very passionate... loyalty to my family and friends, to my Parish Priest, to other parishioners, to the University, Catholic Action and my accountancy clients, to the mission of Friends of the Holy Land, indeed to everyone in my community. By avoiding the temptation to emigrate, amongst all the challenges of life here in Bethlehem, I feel loyal to my Holy Land roots, where I feel so privileged to be living. We must never be resentful of others. It is important that everyone uses their talents for the good of the community and in the service of Christ.

Judas held a very deep political rage. He was a Zealot so his main cause in life was to defeat and drive out the Romans from the Holy Lands. Jesus was not interested in that and this would have frustrated and enraged Judas. Today, we must put our frustration with the political controversy on one side, believing and trusting in God and what he gives to us. We need to seek strength from the pain. Instead of being noisy, we must quietly do good for others, utilise our talents, pray and influence others to be disciples of God. These difficult months since Covid-19 arrived in the Holy Land have taught me the importance of maintaining our core values, being discreet, open, transparent, loyal, respectful of others - never feeling resentful, victimised, an outsider, and always having hope, trusting in God.

At the end of the Gospels, Judas was still calling Jesus 'Rabbi' and not 'Lord' like the other disciples. Perhaps he never accepted that Jesus was the Son of God, so it seems that he was not as spiritually alive as the other disciples. I think it is the same today - some people seem "on the outside" to be very close to Jesus - they are very often in church, perhaps they are active in the community, but with time and a closer look you learn that they are really filled with their own agenda and plans - it is their will not God's will that really matters most for them. I think there is something of that in all of us if we are honest.

I take equal pride in my national and religious roots. Being a good Christian has never stopped me being a good Palestinian, and vice-versa. May God give me the strength to remain loyal and see my way forward to being a faithful Disciple.

Short Reflection on Scripture and the Poem

How can we understand Judas' betrayal of Jesus after all that they had shared together? The poem offers some possible explanations - in Judas' character a feeling or complex of being the outsider amongst the disciples, somehow being overlooked and mistrusted, and in his political self a single-minded commitment to the defeat of his people's hated Roman oppressors.

Responsibility brings with it meaning and meaning is what makes life worth living. By taking full responsibility for everything in one's life, one holds oneself at a very high standard and allows oneself to become in control of everything within one's life.

The other side of this is to become a victim and victims are always trapped by their lack of control and their complaining and/or blaming. Responsibility is just a better way to live one's life.

Please take a few moments of silence to reflect on what you have read.

How do I understand and explain the causes of the 'betrayals' which I have been guilty of in my own life – of other people, of myself, of God?

How do I want to live my life?

CLOSING PRAYER

God our Father knows all the needs of his people, but he wants us to give first place to his kingdom. Let us proclaim his greatness in our prayer.

R: May your kingdom come in all its justice.

Holy Father, you gave us Christ as the shepherd of our souls; may your people always have priests who care for them with his great love. **R:**

Give hope to the sick and make them well again, especially during this time of Pandemic; help us to comfort and take care of them. **R:**

Help those who do not believe in the gospel to come into your Church; build it up in love to manifest your goodness everywhere. **R:**

Father, we know that we are sinners; grant us your forgiveness and reconcile us with your Church. **R:**

May the dead enter eternal life – especially those who died during the Pandemic; may they abide with you for ever. **R:**

LEADER In the silence of our hearts let us bring to the Father our thanks [pause]
In sorrow let us ask the Father for forgiveness [pause]
With confidence let us entrust to the Father our cares and concerns [pause]

ALL Almighty God, by the cross and resurrection of your Son you have given life to your people. We have received the sign of the cross: make us living proof of its saving power and help us to persevere in the footsteps of Christ. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Acknowledgement:
“Holy Week Voices from the Holy Land”

[You may wish to purchase a physical copy directly from Friends of the Holy Land or obtain an electronic/digital version (also priced £7.99), both of which are available from their website: www.friendsofthehollyland.org.uk

The proceeds of this book (priced at £7.99 plus postage and packaging) will go to the Friends of the Holy Land to aid their work with the neediest of our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. As with those closer to home, our brothers and sisters there have suffered dramatically during the coronavirus pandemic, including economically with the cessation of pilgrimages and tourism and the resulting loss of income]

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Father, through our baptism you have made us missionary disciples of your Son. Through your Word you teach us how to follow him; through the Eucharist you fill us with his life and send us out on mission. May we never harden our hearts to your call, but eagerly seek your guidance for our own lives so that we may be a light for others and salt for the earth. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

In a few moments of silence, consider the questions below then share your reflections.

1 What are the main features of the world we live in that make it open to receiving the Gospel?

ii What are the main features of the world we live in that make it resistant to receiving the Gospel?

I How ready do you feel to share the Gospel with others in your daily life?