

Wednesday of Holy Week
Homily of Bishop Barres
St. Agnes Cathedral
March 31, 2021

Before our entrance into the Sacred Triduum, the Church presents us the mystery of the betrayal of Judas Iscariot in the 26th Chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

To betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver was not the result of a single moment of grand betrayal but the result of a series of small and consistent betrayals in Judas' life that culminated with this great betrayal of Christ at the Last Supper and in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Judas and Peter present us an important contrast in their betrayals.

Judas betrays Christ and surrenders to pride, self-hatred and self-destruction.

Peter denies and betrays Christ as the cock crows one, two and three times. But Peter humbles himself and becomes through his humility the Rock of the Church he is called to become.

The second reading that we will hear proclaimed this Easter Sunday morning from the 10th Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles shows how Peter has moved from cowardice, fear and betrayal to a bold and courageous witness to the Risen Lord.

This contrast between how Judas and Peter deal with their betrayals of the Lord has important spiritual applications as we prepare tomorrow to enter the Sacred Triduum.

Anger, hostility, frustration even hatred of ourselves are so often the bitter fruits of our sins and betrayals. They need be surfaced and brought to the Divine Mercy. Christ's humility and meekness must be their balm and the instrument of their healing most powerfully through the Sacrament of Penance.

We always remember that the Catholic spirit of repentance is grounded in humility, mercy, forgiveness and charity rather than a spirit of self-loathing, self-punishment and self-destruction.

Understanding and living that critical distinction sets us free.

To say that we all betray Christ is not an exercise in hyperbole, exaggeration or excessive drama.

Our consistent sinfulness and need for Christ's Mercy are always before us.

In his April 5, 2020 Palm Sunday homily given last year, Pope Francis explored our own betrayals of the Lord. He writes: "Let us look within. If we are honest with ourselves, we will see our infidelities. How many falsehoods, hypocrisies and duplicities! How many good intentions betrayed! How many broken promises! How many resolutions left unfulfilled! The Lord knows our hearts better than we do. He knows how weak and irresolute we are, how many times we fall, how hard it is for us to get up and how difficult it is to heal certain wounds... (Jesus) healed us by taking upon himself our infidelity and by taking from us our betrayals. Instead of being discouraged by the fear of failing, we can now look upon the crucifix (and) feel his embrace."

"Infidelities, falsehoods, hypocrisies, duplicities, broken promises, unfulfilled resolutions" -- what a litany of betrayal and what a painful but potentially healing mirror to hold up before ourselves on this Wednesday of Holy Week.

The Death and Resurrection of Christ that we celebrate this Holy Week as we prepare to enter the Sacred Triduum is what delivers us from this litany of betrayal and sin and is what delivers us to the power and healing grace of the Divine Mercy.