

PASTORAL COUNCIL

Thoughts for Reflections

February 28, 2016

Judas

People in the Bible are often archetypal, and none more so than Judas. So little is said about him, yet so infamous he is that almost anyone, Christian or not, knows of his betrayal. The Jewish leadership and their antagonism for the young upstart carpenter from Nazareth are quite understandable, but Judas's actions are more opaque. He was one of Jesus' own group, hand-picked to be one of His friends. How could Judas have been so close to our loving God and yet remained so aloof?

Unfortunately for me, it's far too easy to stand in Judas's shoes.

I well recall my first Lent as a revert in the Church. A surprising realization came to me during Holy Week: grateful as I was to have discovered the truth of the Church, and glad as I was to finally have submitted my soul to God, I still had more in common with the Jews – and with Judas – than I did with Jesus.

We can be fairly sure that Jesus knew the condition of Judas's heart. He knew that Judas would be the one to betray him. However, none of the other disciples seemed to have been aware of it. If they had, there would have been no questions about "Lord, is it I?" No, Judas must have been playing it deep, saying all the right things, perhaps even maintaining a measure of belief. But beneath it all, he kept a grip on his right to think and do as he wished. Said another way, Judas gave lip service to God but withheld his heart. He retained control of his own salvation. Pride can do that to a man.

It is not as if Judas was not a religious person. He understood what he had done: "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." He realized the cheap exchange he had made, and threw the pieces of silver into the temple, an expression of worthlessness tossed in the face of all that's holy. And then – "He went away and hanged himself." Consistent to the end, even to the point of being his own judge and executioner, he made no room in his heart for Christ's forgiving love.

No, I do not want to be like Judas. I prefer to be like St. Peter, who loved Jesus dearly. When he heard the third cockcrow, he "wept bitterly," but he did not despair. Jesus loves us even as we sin. However, his love comes to fruition within us when we repent and confess our sins. Then He rushes in to fill us with his grace, as if we had never sinned. He loves us as a prodigal son.

We cannot love Jesus and at the same time hide from Him. He already knows our true nature, but let us admit it to ourselves and confess it to our God. Confession is one of God's greatest gifts to us. This Lent, let us find the superabundance of God's forgiving grace in the Confes-