

Homily For Tuesday of Holy Week - Year II
St Peter's 8:30 am Mass - Tuesday, March 26, 2024

Isaiah 49: 1-6 "I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach the end of the earth."

Psalms 71 "You, O Lord, are my hope ... My mouth will tell of your deeds of salvation."

John 13:21-33,36-38 "Peter said: Lord, why can I not follow you now? Jesus said: You will follow later."

Children of Light

Introduction

On Holy Thursday, we will remember, not the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, but the institution of the sacrament of Christ's ongoing presence with us in the Eucharist. But on this Tuesday of Holy Week, the liturgy emphasizes that it was at that special Passover meal that the worst of betrayals took place, that will end with the crucifixion on Good Friday. Judas took the bread from the saviour and left at once, and went out into the night. It is always night when we move away from the one who is the light of the world, light from light, true God from true God. Light and darkness. Satan and Jesus. Judas and Peter.

Isaiah

We hear part of what is called the 'servant song', from Isaiah 49. The servant knows he has been called from birth. Initially, this is Isaiah himself. God's mission for him is to gather the lost children of Israel. At that, Isaiah feels like he has laboured in vain. But this is where the prophecy comes in. God tells him that even this mission, which seems overwhelming to Isaiah, is too small. God says to Isaiah that it is too 'light' a thing that Israel should be a servant. It is a small thing compared to God's plan for Israel, which is to be a 'light' to the nations. We are part of the many nations today, who have seen this light, so it is fulfilled.

Jesus, a son of Israel, will be both of those things. He will be the one who serves God perfectly. This he will do in a life and an act of total self giving. But he will also be the light for nations, not just for Israel but for all the nations.

John

Jesus knew that his hour had come. But that's not the reason he was troubled at that particular moment. He was "deeply troubled" because he would be betrayed. I would be surprised if any of us could not remember a time when we were betrayed by someone we did not suspect. It hurts a lot. Judas was a brother. They were sitting down to a meal of fellowship. But Satan enters him just at that moment of fellowship. At the Eucharist, Jesus enters into us. But, at that first Eucharist, Satan entered Judas before the Eucharist.

Why did Judas betray Jesus? Surely three years with Jesus should have given him a sense of God's hand acting to bring all things to the right conclusion. And, yet, he somehow got lost along the way, and confused about from where the victory would come. Judas is so close to the Light of the world. He has learned that Jesus is the Messiah, the Holy One of God. But so does Satan, so that is not protection against being a betrayer.

Peter cannot imagine such a betrayal. He cannot even imagine denying Jesus. But Jesus always knows our hearts. We learn this from his three years of reading the hearts of men and women. He sees the definitive turn towards darkness of Judas. In Peter, he sees that it is a temporary darkness, that of fear.

All around us there are dark forces seeking to destroy him and to entice us to betray him. But a door has to be open for Satan to enter in. We all betray Jesus in some way. Peter does it with his false bravado. I will never deny you. I will lay down my life for you. We can almost hear Jesus answer: No ... no you won't. That is what sin is and that is our spiritual state without Jesus.

The darkness of night seems all around us. But the darkness is NOT where we belong. We belong at the heart of Jesus. While Satan could not prevail over Jesus, he will continue to undermine our participation in Jesus' glory. Jesus gave Judas a piece of bread after which he went out into the night, John's point to us that it is possible to go from the light to a place where there is not light. Later, this same bread will be broken and Jesus will declare that this bread IS his body, blessed and broken to bring the hearts of everyone who will receive it, into communion with

the Father and the Son. Jesus makes sure that Satan will not be present at this sacrament. He sends Satan out into the night, into the darkness.

Call To Conversion

It should be a terrifying thing for us to know that it is possible to share a meal with Jesus, even while feeding on the lies of the devil. Should we be worried that this could happen to us? Yes, if we let pride dictate our hearts. But not if we do as the beloved disciple John did, lean against the heart of Jesus. We all betray or deny Jesus in some way. Peter does it with his false bravado.

The Catechism tells us, "at the very hour of darkness, the hour of the prince of this world, the sacrifice of Christ becomes the source from which the forgiveness of our sins will pour forth inexhaustibly." The darkness of the night is not where we belong. We belong at the heart of Jesus. All of us will betray Jesus in some way. That is what sin is and that is our spiritual state without Jesus. Despite how it looks in that moment of darkness, God's great plan for the blessing of the world will not be thwarted. Pharaoh could not do it over a thousand years earlier. Herod couldn't do it. Pilate and Caiaphas won't be able to do it. And neither will Judas.

It is a day to be aware of the darkness, but we are children of the light. Today, let us shun the darkness and turn to the light again and again. Let us not be casual about this because it means everything. Nothing could matter more than receiving him in his body, blood, soul and divinity, the light to the nations.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *False witnesses rise up against me and they breathe out violence.*

Collect: *Grant us so to celebrate the mysteries of the Lord's Passion, that we may merit to receive your pardon.*

Isaiah: *The Lord called me before I was born. While I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword. He made me a polished arrow. In his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me: "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But I said: "I have laboured in vain. I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity." The Lord says, who formed me, that Israel will be gathered to him. I will give you as a light to the nation, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*

Psalm: *I will sing of your salvation, O Lord. Be to me a rock of refuge, to save me. Rescue me from the hand of the wicked ... I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.*

John: *Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world. Troubled in spirit, he declared: One of you will betray me. Peter motioned the one whom Jesus loved to ask Jesus: Lord, who is it? Jesus answered: It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread. So, when he had dipped it in the dish, he gave it to Judas. After he received the bread, Satan entered Judas. He immediately went out, and it was night. Jesus said: Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. God will also glorify him in himself. Little children, where I am going, you cannot come. Simon Peter said: Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered: Where I am going, you cannot follow now. Peter said: Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Jesus answered: Will you lay down your life for me? Before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.*