

Thursday, April 2, 2026

## HOLY THURSDAY

Matthew 26:17-30

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.*

*"Is it I, Lord?"*

*"And as they were eating,  
[Jesus] said,  
'Truly, I say to you,  
one of you will betray Me.'  
And they were very sorrowful  
and began to say to Him  
one after another,  
'Is it I, Lord?'" (Matthew 26:21–22)*

My friends,

Is there a more sorrowful thing to say?

*"One of you will betray Me."*

*"Is it I, Lord?"*

Jesus is their precious Lord and Master.

They had left everything to follow Him. (Matthew 19:27)

And when many of the crowds

had stopped following Jesus,

they had remained.

They confessed, *"Lord, to whom shall we go?*

*You have the words of eternal life,*

*and we have believed,*

*and have come to know,*

*that You are the Holy One of God."* (John 6:67–69)

They love and trust him.

He is everything to them.

*'Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.'*

It's one of those rare moments of clarity.

One of those times

that the Disciples understand clearly.

They hear those words.

And they become *very sorrowful*.

Because they realize something.

They see something in themselves.

And it's **not** good.

Each individual realizes

that he could be the one.

The Twelve don't start pointing fingers at each other.

They point them at themselves.

One after another, they ask—

*"Is it I, Lord?"*

St. John is leaning back against Jesus (John 13:25)

as they recline around the table.

As he leans against Jesus,

he suddenly wonders.

Could I betray Jesus?

And he becomes sorrowful.

*"Is it I, Lord?"*

And so all around the table, one by one, they ask.

Peter.

James (son of Zebedee).

Andrew.

Philip.

Bartholomew.

Thomas.

Matthew.

James (son of Alphaeus).

Thaddaeus.

Simon the Zealot.

*"Is it I, Lord?"*

And then it comes around,  
 finally,  
 to Judas Iscariot.  
 Which means he is likely on Jesus' right.  
 A place of honour at the table.  
 "*Judas,*  
*who would betray Him,*  
*answered, 'Is it I, Rabbi?'*  
*[Jesus] said to him,*  
*'You have said so.'*" (Matthew 26:25)

And then Jesus gives them (and us) the Lord's Supper.  
 And none of them deserve it.  
 None of them has earned it.  
 None of them is worth it.  
 All of them know  
 that they could betray Him.  
 They are all sinners.  
 Just like us,  
 capable of betrayal and denial.  
 Jesus knows it.  
 And they know it.

Five verses after our Gospel reading,  
 the disciples will muster up some bravado.  
 "*Peter said to Jesus, '*  
*Even if I must die with you,*  
*I will not deny you!'*  
*And **all** the disciples said the same."* (Matthew 26:35)  
 But we all know how that turns out, don't we?  
 With a kiss,  
 Judas betrays Jesus  
 for thirty pieces of silver.

"*Then all the disciples left [Jesus] and fled.*" (Matthew 26:56)  
 And Peter denies Jesus.  
 Not just once.  
 Three times.  
 "*And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus,  
 'Before the rooster crows,  
 you will deny me three times.'*  
*And [Peter] went out  
 and wept bitterly.*" (Matthew 26:75)

What a sad, sorry lot.  
 Good thing this Sacrament of the Altar  
 is for sinners.  
 On that night,  
 when the Lord was betrayed,  
 the only people at His table were sinners.  
 Sinners capable of betraying Jesus.  
 They were sinners,  
 and they knew it.

"*Now as they were eating,  
 Jesus took bread,  
 and after blessing it  
 broke it  
 and gave it to the disciples,  
 and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.'*  
*And He took a cup,  
 and when He had given thanks  
 He gave it to them, saying,  
 'Drink of it, all of you,  
 for this is My blood of the covenant,  
 which is poured out for many  
 for **the forgiveness of sins.**  
 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine  
 until that day  
 when I drink it new  
 with you in my Father's kingdom.*" (Matthew 26:26–29)

Those twelve sinners ate with the God of Israel.

He gave them His body.

He gave them His blood.

*"And He did not lay His hand*

*on the chief men of the people of Israel.*

*They beheld God, and ate and drank."* (Exodus 24:14)

*"For this is My blood of the covenant,*

*which is poured out for many*

*for **the forgiveness of sins.***

*"Behold the blood of the covenant*

*that the Lord has made with you*

*in accordance with all these words."* (Exodus 24:8)

This is the good news.

Jesus is the forgiveness of your sins.

This meal is for the forgiveness of your sins.

The cup is the cup of salvation.

For those who need to be saved.

This sacred meal is for sinners.

Jesus is for sinners,

who with sorrow know that without God's grace,  
they could be a Judas.

That, like Peter,

they have denied Jesus to save face.

That, like the disciples,

they too have run.

*"Drink of it, all of you,*

*for this is My blood of the covenant,*

*which is poured out for many*

*for the forgiveness of sins."* (Matthew 26:27–28)

In the cup is the *"blood of Christ,*

*who through the eternal Spirit*

*offered Himself*

*without blemish to God,*

*[to] purify our conscience*

*from dead works*

*to serve the living God."* (Hebrews 9:14)

We are certainly no better than the Apostles.

They were sinners.

Sorrowful with the knowledge  
that "it could be I."

So they took the bread and the wine,  
trusting in these words:

*"Given and shed for you  
for the forgiveness of sins."*

The worthy one at the altar is Jesus.

And He is there for one thing.

To forgive you of your sins.

'These words,

*"Given and shed for you  
for the forgiveness of sins,"*

show us that in the Sacrament,

forgiveness of sins,

life,

and salvation

are given us through these words.

For where there is forgiveness of sins,  
there is also life and salvation.' (LSC).

Who needs forgiveness?

*"Is it I, Lord?"*

When you approach this altar,

you go up the Lord's Mountain.

You might not see *the pavement of sapphire stone,*  
*like the very heaven for clearness.*

But heaven is here.

God is here.

Not to destroy in power and glory.

But to serve humbly.

To give forgiveness

in the Body and the Blood.

To wash us with His Word.

*"Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."*

Trusting His Word,  
you behold God.  
You eat and drink.  
And you are forgiven.

*And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, amen.*