



Wednesday of Holy Week



Date: Wednesday, April 16, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C

First Reading: Isaiah 50:4–9a

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 69:8–10, 21–22, 31, 33–34 | **Response:** Psalm 69:14c

Gospel Acclamation: Hail to you, our King! You alone have had compassion on our sins.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 26:14–25

Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

The image of the servant in Isaiah’s song pierces the heart with its quiet strength. Here is one who listens with the ear of a disciple, whose words sustain the weary, and yet who embraces suffering with resolute dignity. His back is exposed to the lash, his face unshielded from humiliation. This is no passive submission; it is an active and defiant proclamation of trust in the Lord God, who stands as his vindicator. In this servant, we see a foretaste of Christ’s Passion—a love that bears insult and scorn for the sake of the weary and the downtrodden. The servant’s suffering is not meaningless; it is redemptive, imbued with the purpose of revealing God’s steadfast presence in the midst of human brokenness.

The psalmist’s lament echoes this truth. “For your sake, I bear insult; shame covers my face.” These are not the words of despair but of profound solidarity with the suffering servant of Isaiah. The psalmist knows the sting of betrayal, the ache of rejection, and the weight of shame. Yet even in the depths of this anguish, there is a flicker of hope, a light that refuses to be extinguished. “In your great mercy, turn to me,” he prays. These words remind us that God’s mercy is never far from those who cry out in their pain. For the Lord hears the afflicted and does not spurn his own.

And then we come to Judas. His name has become synonymous with betrayal, yet here he sits at the table with Jesus, sharing bread, speaking words of feigned innocence: “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” It is a question that reverberates through history, piercing the hearts of disciples in every generation. Surely it is not I. But can we be so sure? The betrayal of Judas did not occur in a vacuum; it unfolded

within the intimate circle of Jesus' closest followers. It serves as a stark reminder of the frailty of the human heart, even among those who walk closest to the Lord.

In the face of Judas's treachery, Jesus remains unshaken. He does not recoil in anger or despair but continues to fulfill the mission entrusted to him. His love, even for Judas, remains steadfast—a love that does not shield itself from rejection, a love that endures even when it is not returned. This is the love we are called to imitate, especially during Holy Week, as we walk with Christ through the shadow of the cross.

As we consider the betrayal of Judas, we must also confront the ways in which we, too, have betrayed Christ—through our indifference, our selfishness, our failure to love as he has loved us. And yet, even in our betrayal, Christ offers us the same love he offered Judas: a love that calls us to repentance, to transformation, to a deeper union with him.

In the Zambian context, we might think of the many ways betrayal plays out on a societal level—corruption that undermines trust, inequities that betray the dignity of the human person, and indifference to the cries of the poor and marginalized. The Gospel challenges us to examine our complicity in these betrayals and to commit ourselves to the path of justice, mercy, and love.

The third Servant Song, the psalmist's lament, and Judas's betrayal converge on this Holy Wednesday to remind us that discipleship is not about avoiding suffering but about embracing it with trust in the God who redeems. It is about speaking words of hope to the weary, bearing witness to God's mercy, and remaining steadfast in love, even when love is met with rejection.

As we prepare for the Triduum, let us ask ourselves:

- How do we respond when faced with suffering or betrayal? Do we, like the servant, trust in the Lord's vindication, or do we shrink back in fear?
- Are we willing to confront the ways in which we have betrayed Christ, in our hearts and in our actions?
- And finally, how might we, as individuals and as a community, become bearers of hope for the weary and the marginalized in our midst?

May these questions guide us into the heart of Holy Week, where Christ's love, poured out on the cross, beckons us to a deeper fidelity and a more generous love. Let us walk this path with courage, knowing that the God who calls us is faithful and will never abandon us.

Source: <https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-04apr-16-yc-hw-we/>

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