



Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

March 19th, 1876

Betrayal of Judas¹

My dear daughters,

Last time, I recommended that you meditate on the Passion of our Lord during Lent. Today, I would like to urge you, however painful it may be, to meditate attentively on the betrayal of Judas.

I believe there was nothing in the Passion more painful for the heart of Our Lord. A wife must share in this great suffering of her Spouse. She must enter into His Heart, offer Him her sympathy and her pain, try to penetrate His feelings, and not leave Him alone in this abandonment, in this betrayal so keenly felt.

If you want to understand the pain Our Lord felt, meditate on the psalms. You will see that David, who spoke in the name of Christ, continually returns to the immense pain He experienced at being betrayed by the one He called His friend, in whom He had placed His trust, who broke bread at His table and slept with Him.

This is a great lesson for us, my daughters. Since Our Lord, for our love and our salvation, was willing to suffer such a great offense, such a great wound, such a great reversal of human delicacy, we too must prepare our hearts not to be too sensitive, to prepare them to suffer—I won't say betrayals, that's a strong word—but at least the small wounds, to accept them with affection, not to rebel if something offends the delicateness of our hearts or our feelings.

Religious people always find themselves faced with the highest truths: God, Who is the object of their love, is infinite holiness and essential perfection. As a result, all the finess of the heart, the noblest and highest sentiments, are highly developed in them. Sometimes, too, it results in them feeling wounds, coldness, lack of delicacy, trust, and affection more keenly. However, if they are generous and faithful, they accept this and offer it to Our Lord, rising higher through self-denial and the acceptance of suffering, in union with Our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is one point of view. There is another very painful one, but one that must be considered: Judas was a priest and even a bishop, since he was one of the twelve Apostles. We cannot hide from ourselves that, among the immense number of priests whom Our Lord chose and called to His service, there were traitors from the beginning, there are still some in the time in which we live, and there will be some until the end of the world. It is dreadful to think that there are in the Church, I know neither where nor how, people who dishonor, through treason and sin, the priestly character and even the episcopal character. There were certainly traitors in the episcopate, since among the leaders of heresy, there were bishops.

¹ Chapter reviewed by Mother Marie Eugenie

How much must a religious, the bride of Jesus Christ, pray for priests when she meditates on the betrayal of Judas! How earnestly she must pray to God that in the midst of the dangers and perils that surround them, not a single one may fall, if possible! How she must pray that he who is on the edge of the abyss may stop and not be thrown into it; that he who has fallen may be converted and rise again!

What ardor must animate her prayer when she asks for holiness for the clergy, strength for those whom Our Lord has chosen and called to the priesthood, so that they may remain steadfast in goodness and not inflict the cruelest offense on His heart! For every priest ascending the altar, guilty and an enemy of God, repeats the crime and betrayal of Judas. Unfortunately, we cannot hide the fact that this misfortune often occurs.

After this, let us return to ourselves. This is not a question of heresy or mortal sin. Let us, however, seek how the spirit of betrayal that led Judas to betray his Master can be found in us. This attitude grew little by little. We must remember that Judas was with Our Lord and that he lived in the Community of the Apostles. You cannot imagine a Religious Order, a Congregation whose perfection equals that of the Apostolic College.

Our Lord Himself instructed His disciples. He formed them in every virtue and separated them from every human thing. How poor they were! They had left everything for him! What a spirit of prayer! What an evangelical spirit! We received it only from Him. It came to us only through Him, and it is on this foundation that the most perfect Orders are built.

Judas was part of this holy Community. He had heard Our Lord's call and responded. He had loved Our Lord and left everything to follow Him. He had lived this perfect life, he had performed miracles and cast out demons. He had proclaimed the Gospel of peace and charity. He had received great graces: the grace of the apostolate, the grace of intimate association with Jesus Christ, the grace of miracles—I do not say the grace of revelations, for the sight of our Lord Jesus Christ was a continual revelation. — All this had been given to him, and he had shown himself worthy of it for a time, since he had been able to participate in this life and not be cast out from the beginning.

How, having risen so high, could he have fallen so low? This is a question that must always be asked. We must say to ourselves: "I believe, I hope that I love Our Lord and that I love Him more than anything in the world; that I try in all my actions to draw closer to Him; but how did Judas, after having been raised so high, fall so terribly? Obviously, he allowed passions and human attachments to live within him. He had that of money. It must have started with very small things that he did not want to get rid of. Well, if I want to remain forever faithful to Our Lord, I must examine my heart carefully to tear out all the fibers that are not for God." This is what Saint Francis de Sales said: If I saw in my heart a single fiber that was not for God, I would rather tear out my whole heart than leave it there. This should be the state of a fervent religious, who watches over herself to remove from her soul everything that is not for God or that may displease Him.

Besides this, there was a second cause for Judas' fall, which was his confidence in himself and in his own judgment. When our Lord received from Magdalene a tribute of adoration, piety, and love, when she poured a very expensive ointment on Jesus' feet, Judas found fault. His Superior was the Son of God descended to earth, Who had chosen to take on the sweetest, most amiable features—I won't say the holiest, of course—but the most condescending for our poor human nature, Who had clothed Himself with such great charms that we cannot read the Gospel without our hearts being attached to the Person of Jesus Christ from a distance. Well, Judas, having this Superior, kept his own judgment. He found that

Our Lord could have done better, that he should not have allowed Magdalene to pour the ointment so lavishly.

Certainly, Sisters, it's quite different for religious; they don't have Our Lord visibly in their midst. It's not the Son of God descended from heaven, nor even an angel who governs them; but Jesus allowed this so that they would know the immense danger of judging what is not their responsibility, of criticizing the actions of others with the permission of their Superiors. Magdalene stood at the feet of Our Lord and lavished on Him the signs of her tenderness. Our Lord permitted it, approved of it, but Judas did not.

This can happen in a Community; we say to ourselves: "But why does such and such a Sister devote so much time to prayer?... But this Sister doesn't do this in such a way; I'm surprised our Mother doesn't see it; of course, she doesn't know it." I'm not saying that if our Mother doesn't know it, we shouldn't tell her. But this inner judgment, this blaming, this criticism, based on some reason that one believes to be holier and more perfect, is a danger that one doesn't really know how to avoid.

The first characteristic that the Holy Spirit was pleased to reveal to us in this fall of Judas is the attachment to money, the vilest and contemptible passion of all. The second, as we have just seen, is selfishness, being judgmental, blaming and severity in judging others. Who was Judas judging? A lover of Our Lord, a soul raised to the highest heavens beside the seraphim, a soul whose fidelity was so great that, when all the apostles fled, she did not abandon her Master, but followed Him to Calvary, remained at the foot of the cross, and deserved to be honored by the Church as the type of love and fidelity.

Finally, there is a third characteristic I would like to point out to you. It was not all at once, but little by little, that Judas reached this extreme iniquity. He listened to the devil and his suggestions. He hid from Our Lord. He was not open with his Divine Superior. He lacked rectitude, candor, and simplicity. He became biased. He told Our Lord he was going here, and he went there. He could not, it is true, deceive the supernatural and divine vision of One who penetrates the secrets of hearts.

For the consolation of earthly Superiors who can be deceived, our Lord deigned to close His eyes. He did what an ordinary Superior would have done: He let Judas go, yet He never tired of warning him with great charity and tenderness.

It is because Superiors on earth do not see the secrets of hearts that it is necessary that the inferior uncover these to them, who shows herself to them and makes herself known with rectitude and a completely trusting simplicity. Certainly, if from the first moment, Judas had said to Jesus Christ: "My Master, I feel an attraction for the money with which I am charged. I must confess to you that the Pharisees seek to speak to me, I have even entered into conversation with them," he would not have fallen into the abyss. You understand, before reaching this extremity, there were many conversations, many comings and goings. The enemies of Jesus saw in Judas these dispositions which made them know that they could address this disciple. The devil, who prowled constantly around him, must have penetrated his heart in many places, before daring to propose this execrable crime to him.

Every religious who wishes to be faithful to Our Lord must pay attention to the little things. She must always maintain obedience, fidelity, and complete openness of soul. There must be no temptation, no difficulty, no conversation with the demon she keeps for herself. This, as Saint Ignatius says, would expose her to falling.

Finally, one last thing, and this is where I end: Judas obviously fell because he did not love. All our efforts must be aimed at increasing the love of Our Lord in our hearts. All meditation on the Passion of Our Lord must culminate there, and by thinking of Judas's betrayal, we must stir ourselves to love through these three considerations.

The first is what Our Lord suffered in the extreme pain caused by Judas' betrayal. The second is the wounds His Heart still receives in the Eucharist from the betrayals He still experiences today, not only from bad Christians, but also from bad priests. Finally, the third consideration is the love shown to us by the Savior of our souls, of the infinite kindness of this Superior par excellence. This consideration will ensure that there will never be a moment when our hearts turn away from Him, that no personal consideration, no attachment, no possession, no temptation will prevent us from always returning to Him, with a love that grows daily.

If Judas's love had grown like that of Saint Peter, he would not have reached the point of betraying his Master. On the contrary, it began with a certain fervor, then grew cold. Gradually he fell first into lukewarmness, then into lies, finally into sin and the height of iniquity. He lost himself beside the very One who saved the greatest sinners.

When Wednesday returns, the day on which Judas's betrayal was prepared, we must reflect on what Our Lord suffered and say to ourselves: "At this hour, the disloyal and traitorous disciple was going to Bethany, and from there to Jerusalem. He was haggling over the price of the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ saw this, and for my salvation and for my love, He accepted this betrayal that inflicted such a deep wound on His adorable heart."

I offer you this thought for Wednesday. You can extend it to all the other days of the week that correspond to the Passion, and on Thursday you can focus on the remembrance of the Last Supper, and on Friday on the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you always remain close to the holy humanity of Our Lord, if you adore it deeply, if you love it tenderly, if you do not separate yourself from it, you will thereby preserve yourselves from the danger of betrayal, which is possible for everyone, since it was possible for an apostle of Jesus Christ. We are not sure of not falling, but we can preserve ourselves from this fall by fidelity, humility, obedience and love.