

Good Friday: Before We Condemn

By Anand Peter

Today, let us stay focused on the crucified Jesus. Our meditation should include the sufferings He underwent, and the seven sayings He preached from the Cross. Most Christians and churches will be doing that. Some who have not been schooled in the Christian faith may also be asking around about the significance of the day. I have therefore decided to touch upon a related subject today.

Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, vanished into oblivion very quickly. Except for a short mention of his death, we find no further mention of him in the biblical accounts. What strikes me most is the conflict in his character. He hardened his heart to the extent that he went ahead and betrayed his Master, and soon sank into depression out of remorse, and took his own life. I have always wondered how matters might have turned out for him, had he only looked into the eyes of Jesus, pleading for forgiveness, as Peter did. Should we feel some sympathy for him?

The truth is that all of us have something of the traitor in us; each of us hands our fellow human beings over to suffering somehow, somewhere, mostly without intending or even knowing it. Even children, in their growing years, and adults too, can experience deep anger toward their parents, siblings, teachers, and pastors, for having overprotected them, or for the absence of any protection at all. Remember, finding reasons for our own wrongdoing is the easiest thing in the world to do.

People who live close together, or associate closely, can become sources of great sorrow for one another. When Jesus chose His twelve disciples, Judas was one of them. He has since become a traitor — a traitor, according to the literal meaning of the Greek word behind "betraying," being one who hands another over to suffering.

When we are willing to confess that we, too, often hand those we love, and those associated with us, over to suffering in one way or another, even against our best intentions, we will be more ready to seek forgiveness, to give forgiveness, and to receive forgiveness, and so lessen the pain we feel, or have caused. Jesus said: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him" (Matthew 5:23-25).

This is exactly what we should be doing before we approach the Cross and seek the forgiveness of Jesus today. I seek the forgiveness of all those whom I have knowingly or unknowingly offended, betrayed, or in any way become the cause of suffering. When the peace of Jesus, which passes all understanding, settles in my heart, I will know that I have been forgiven by all of them, and then I can rejoice that my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, has also forgiven me.