



The Last Supper, El Greco (1568)

Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna *Downloaded from <https://www.thehistoryofart.org/>*

²¹ After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”

²² His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. ²³ One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.”

²⁵ Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”

²⁶ Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” ²⁸ But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹ Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. ³⁰ As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

³¹ When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

(John 13:21-32 a lectionary reading for today)

Silence, Prayer, And Communion Ending 9.30 a.m.

Silence

A time for thought...reflection...prayer

Prayer - *reflecting on themes from Holy Week*

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple (Mt 21:12a)

Reflect on

the bad habits that have crept into our own lives

Pray for

the strength to drive them out

Loving Lord,

may we reflect your love for us by showing love to others

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith." (Mt: 23:23)

Reflect on

the focus of our own religious practice and spiritual life

Pray for

the courage to speak up for the poor, the oppressed and the victims of injustice

Loving Lord,

may we reflect your love for us by showing love to others

"Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." (Mk 12:43b-44)

Reflect on

the things we begrudge giving to others

Pray for

generosity in giving time, talents and resources for the service of God

Loving Lord,

may we reflect your love for us by showing love to others

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. (John 13:34)

Reflect on

the times when you have felt touched by God's love for you or by the love of others

Pray for

those whom you find it difficult to love

Loving Lord,

may we reflect your love for us by showing love to others

We say together:

**Lord, we remember that many who claimed you as King on Sunday
shouted “Crucify” on Friday.**

**May our love for you never falter
when the world around us turns away from you
or grow weary and stale over time
but remain ever fresh and ever constant,
just as your love is towards us. Amen**

And

*Please stay for the communion even if not taking the bread and wine. You can come to the
rail for a blessing (a brief prayer) – simply carry this sheet.*

Communion

*A moment to reflect on the times when we have not been loyal to God and His ways and have
not cared for others.*

In God’s holy presence we call to mind our need for forgiveness.

Silence

**Father, our sin has brought you sorrow,
has harmed those who share our life,
has been hurtful to ourselves.**

**We dare not say we have only lightly sinned;
yet Christ has taken to himself the burden of it all.**

In Jesus’ name may we be freed from the penalty and power of sin. **Amen.**

God of love and wonder, we sing your praises:
with the great company of people, past and present, here and everywhere.

We adore you, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

You are indeed holy, eternal God and Father;
in love greater than we can imagine you gave your only Son,
that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.
Not as we would, but as we are able,
we praise and thank you for the reality of his birth,
the glory of his humanity, the generosity of his life:
for his sacrifice on the cross, the wonder of his resurrection,
and the assurance that he lives for ever to save us;
for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for our calling to be his people,

for the hope all can find in him.

We say together:

**Remembering his life and sacrifice
we now come to his table as he has invited us to do.
Send to us now, we pray, the Holy Spirit
so that we may indeed be your people,
and that as we share the bread and wine
we may share in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Amen**

These are the gifts of God
for the people of God.

Ending

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

A post-communion prayer, said together

**Lord Jesus Christ,
we thank you that in this wonderful sacrament
you have given us the memorial of your passion:
grant us so to reverence the sacred mysteries of your body and blood
that we may know within ourselves
and show forth in our lives
the fruit of your redemption,
for you are alive and reign, now and for ever. Amen**

The blessing

May the Father, who so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
bring you by faith to his eternal life. **Amen.**

May Christ, who accepted the cup of sacrifice in obedience to the Father's will,
keep you steadfast as you walk with him the way of his cross. **Amen.**

May the Spirit, who strengthens us to suffer with Christ that we may share his glory,
set your minds on life and peace. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

The next SPACE will be on Wednesday April 2nd

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

The Last Supper

Not surprisingly the Last Supper has been painted by numerous artists over the centuries. El Greco's version is neither the best known nor does it compare with the quality of his later works. But El Greco, as a man of deep personal faith, does give us a clear interpretation of the religious significance of the occasion.

Jesus sits at the far end of the table with Peter and John on either side. The lighting in the room seems strange. The windows are blacked out but the white tablecloth appears to act as a source of light, illuminating the faces of all but one of the men. El Greco's painting captures the moment after Jesus tells his disciples that one of them will betray him (v21). Most of them are in shock. With downcast looks they wonder in silence "Could it be me? Surely not me!" Eventually John, prompted by Peter, asks Jesus who it is (v25). But El Greco has already revealed the answer. In the foreground Judas, the one man clad on dark clothing, turns aggressively towards his neighbour, as if to say "It's you isn't it?". Perhaps it is a ploy to conceal the discomfort of his guilt. Knives on either side of him project over the table edge, each pointing to the betrayer.

A dark cloth hovers above the diners as an ominous presence, an unwelcome intrusion into a celebration of the Passover, a reminder of the liberation of the Jewish people. Judas' garment appears to be made of the same cloth. Jesus' cross-shaped halo anticipates what awaits him on Good Friday. In contrast, the brightness emanating from the table and the simple meal laid out on the table suggests the communion table, a sacramental reminder of Christian hope.

A few moments later Judas would forsake that world of brightness and go out into the darkness of night (v30), forsaking his friends, and the leader he had journeyed with for three years..

The Last Supper has many dimensions. It is a meal among friends; the setting for John's longest passage of teaching; a celebration of the Jewish Passover in Jerusalem; and a pointer to the Eucharist. But as El Greco emphasises, it is also a scene of betrayal, a moment in which carefully nurtured relationships are challenged or ruptured. I'd like to highlight four of these.

1. We are introduced to the "beloved disciple", probably John but we cannot be sure. It is a term not used earlier in the gospel but implies a particularly close bond to Jesus.
2. In contrast Judas is revealed as a betrayer, the breaker of relationships. Not only was he breaking with Jesus but also with the eleven, men who had held him in such high regard that he was entrusted with the common purse.
3. Peter, like the others, was taken aback by the news of a traitor in their midst. But predictably he is the one wanting to get to the bottom of this. So via the beloved disciple he asks Jesus to name the guilty party. Was this because his instant reaction was to attempt to take direct action against the guilty man? After all, soon afterwards Peter was wielding his sword at the High Priest's servant and probably intended to do the same to the betrayer.
4. Jesus himself. We know that he loved each of his disciples, not just the beloved disciple:

*"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you,
so you must love one another. (13:34)*

Although Judas had left the room before Jesus said this, the act of dipping the piece of bread into the dish and giving it to Judas (v26) was, in Jesus' culture, a recognised mark of intimate friendship. He did so even while knowing that Judas was about to betray him. This simple act has been called "the finest practical example of loving your enemies in the entire gospel".

I wonder who we identify with most closely in that scene.

Perhaps it is with the majority of those at table, each wondering in shock and horror if he could be Jesus' betrayer. May we never be faced with such a situation. But do our actions, our omissions, or our innermost desires, ever amount to a betrayal of our loving saviour, Jesus?