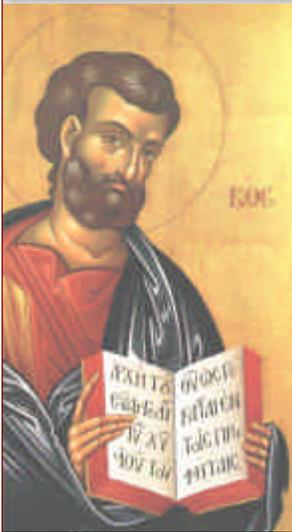


FOLLOW ME

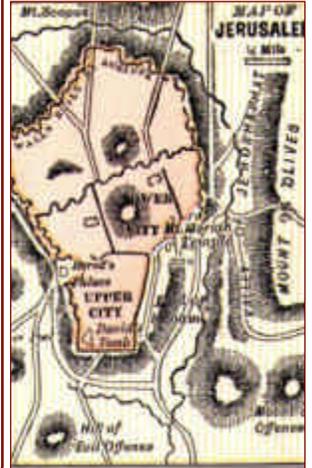
LESSON SEVENTEEN: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK 14:1-42



FAST FACTS

- At Passover the chief priests and scribes plotted with Judas to capture Jesus.
- St. Mary, the sister of Ss. Martha and Lazarus, anointed the head (and feet) of Jesus with costly oil.
- Jesus celebrated Passover with His Disciples in Jerusalem.
- He predicted that He would be betrayed by Judas.
- At the Last Supper eaten by Jesus and His Disciples, Jesus instituted the Eucharist.
- Jesus predicted that St. Peter would deny Him three times before a rooster crowed at sunrise.
- Jesus took Ss. Peter, James and John with Him to pray in the garden of Gethsemane.
- Jesus prayed intently, but the Disciples were unable to stay awake.

MAP



MARK 14:1-11

This passage begins and ends with treachery and betrayal: the religious leaders of Jerusalem plotted to capture Jesus (vv. 1-2), and Judas Iscariot agreed to betray Jesus in exchange for money (vv. 10-11). Judas' assistance as an inside informer for the chief priests was vital: without his information about when it would be easiest to capture Jesus, it would have been difficult to find Him at a time when a large crowd didn't surround him.

In John 12:1-8, St. John supplies many details that round out the story we find in vv. 3-9 (as well as Matthew 26:6-13). St. John tells us that the woman who anointed Jesus was St. Mary, the sister of Ss. Lazarus and Martha (John 12:3); that Judas objected to the extravagance of St. Mary's gesture (12:4; St. Matthew simply says that the Disciples objected (26:8)); and that St. Mary also anointed Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair (12:3).

Jesus' acceptance of St. Mary's gesture did not mean that He was unconcerned about the poor — He cared deeply for them (see Matthew 5:3; 6:2-4; Luke 6:20, 36-38; 21:1-4). Instead, He received her sacrifice as a gift that fittingly prepared His body for His death and burial that would soon occur.

MARK 14:12-21, 26-31

Jesus and His Disciples celebrated the Passover with a traditional meal. Unlike most Passover celebrations, however, Jesus celebrated this as the fulfillment of the Passover, where He would deliver humanity from the

OUR FAITH TEACHES

Venerable Bede links our love for Christ to St. Mary's anointing of His head and feet:

His head, which Mary anointed, represents His deity. His feet indicate the lowliness of His incarnation. We too anoint His feet when we proclaim with due praise the mystery of the incarnation which He took upon Himself. We too anoint His head when we venerate the loftiness of His divinity with a consent fitting Him.

LOOK AT YOURSELF

Jesus told Ss. Peter, James, and John, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38). When we are under stress, as the Disciples were that night, we are particularly vulnerable to temptation. Notice the three things Jesus did in this especially difficult time.

First, He prayed intently. Secondly, in addition to praying alone, He also asked the Disciples to pray (although they let Him down in this case). Finally, His prayer focused on fulfilling the will of the Father.

We should do these same things when we face difficult situations. We must pray about everything we do, and we should particularly pray that we be used by God to accomplish His purpose. We should also ask for the prayers of our family and friends, because "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

power of sin and death.

As they did this evening (e.g., v. 28), the Disciples heard Jesus prophesy on several occasions that He would be crucified and resurrected: here, however, He prophesied that this would occur after one of them had betrayed Him (vv. 18-21). He further prophesied that they would all abandon Him (v. 27). They were shocked by this prediction, and St. Peter even proclaimed that He would die rather than betray Jesus; as we shall see in the second half of this chapter, Jesus' prediction in v. 30 was entirely accurate.

St. Mark mentions Jesus' prediction that the individual who would betray Him would dip bread into a dish with Him (vv. 18-21), but does not mention who this was. St. John tells us that, after making this statement, Jesus handed a piece of bread to Judas (John 13:26).

MARK 14:22-25

This passage is commonly known as the Institution (beginning, or establishment) of the Eucharist. Jesus previously told His Disciples that they would need to eat His Body and drink His Blood (John 6:51-59), but this is the first occasion on which they received the Eucharist.

Many Christians believe that the Eucharist is not really the Body and Blood of Christ; instead, they believe that the bread and wine simply represent Christ. When we look at Jesus' words in Greek, however, we see that He is clearly saying that we are partaking of His *Body* and *Blood*, and not simply eating things which represent them: *touto' estin to sōma' mou* ("This is my body") and *touto' estin to aiēma' mou* ("This is my blood"). It is for this



reason that St. Cyril of Jerusalem writes about the Mystery of Holy Communion:

Since Christ Himself has declared the bread to be His body, who can have any further doubt? Since He Himself has said it quite categorically, This is my blood, who would dare to question it and say that it is not His blood? Therefore, it is with complete assurance that we receive the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ.

OUR FAITH TEACHES

The Eucharist is the supreme act of thanksgiving and praise to God in His Church. Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald states regarding the celebration of the Holy Eucharist during the Divine Liturgy, "This offering is one of great joy, for through it we remember the mighty actions of God through which we have received the gift of salvation, and especially the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. We invoke the Holy Spirit upon ourselves and upon our offering, asking the Father that they become for us the Body and Blood of Christ. Through our thanking and remembering the Holy Spirit reveals the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst." Fr. Alexander Schmemmann describes the Eucharist as "a passage, a procession leading the Church into 'heaven,' into her fulfillment as the Kingdom of God."

Fr. John Braun explains that Communion is the most significant thing we receive from the Divine Liturgy: "Communion is that something [you get from worship]...It is totally, completely, and irrevocably impossible to receive the Body and Blood of Christ and go away with nothing. What could be more life-strengthening than receiving the Son of God who became a human being for our sakes so that we could be energized by Him! That's what happens in Communion. And you can only get that in church."

MARK 14:32-42

St. Luke tells us that the Mount of Olives — and likely, the garden in the orchard of Gethsemane itself — was a place to which Jesus frequently went (Luke 22:39), explaining how Judas was able to later find Him there. Bishop Kallistos Ware explains the significance of Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane:

Christ is here confronted by a choice. Under no compulsion to die, he freely chooses to do so...But this act of free choice is immensely difficult...Full weight must be given to Christ's words at Gethsemane, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death' (Matthew 26:38). Jesus enters at this moment totally into the experience of spiritual death. He is at this moment identifying himself with all the despair and mental pain of humanity; and this identification is far more important to us than his participation in our physical pain.

WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT FOLLOWING JESUS?



- Mary gave generously to Jesus, and showed great humility in her love for Him. Do I love Him that humbly and fully?
- Do I prepare myself to receive Holy Communion, and do I

appreciate the gift that is given to me in this Mystery?

- Do I appreciate Jesus' sacrifice to save humanity? How does this appreciation influence my relationship with Him?

