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**Review:** *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

**DAY ONE**

Read Matthew 26:1-13

**NOTE:** All four Gospels give more attention to Jesus' final days than to the rest of his ministry. In Matthew, Passion Week (Chapters 21-28) comprises nearly one-third of his Gospel. This unparalleled emphasis reflects the centrality of Jesus' Passion and Resurrection in the gospel message. *Ignatius Study Bible*

1. In verse 2 Jesus predicted his death for the fourth and final time saying, "You know that in two days' time it will be Passover, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." "The Passover is one of the great feasts of the Jewish Calendar and one of three feasts that required Israelites to travel to Jerusalem" (Ignatius). Read Exodus 12:24-27 and comment on how this feast is relevant to the Passion of Jesus.

**NOTE:** [In verses 3-5, the chief priests and elders met together in the courtyard of the palace of the high priest, Caiaphas, to discuss their plan to kill Jesus.] This passage shows that it was not the whole Jewish nation that plotted the death of the Lord, but only its leaders. *Navarre*

2. Two days before the Passover, Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon, the leper, where a woman poured an alabaster jar of costly perfumed oil on his head (verses 6-7). How does this act embody "the understanding and loyalty of the women disciples" (Commentary, page 128)?

**THINK:** The Gospels of Matthew and Mark (Mark 14:1-11) record the anointing at Bethany with similar details. In John's account (John 12:1-8), the woman is identified as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. In Luke 7:36-50, Jesus was anointed in the home of a Pharisee by a sinful woman. Consider how those versions change the story for you.

3. The disciples were indignant with the actions of the woman, but Jesus praised her saying, "The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me" (verses 8-12). Do you think this means that we can never end the suffering of poverty (see Deuteronomy 15:11)?

4. Jesus honored the woman who anointed him saying, "Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be spoken of, in memory of her" (verse 13). It is a blessing to remember the generous, selfless acts of others who have gone before us. Share a brief memory of a loving act performed by a woman in your life.

5. **CONNECTION:** The example of courage, hope and love by the woman who anointed Jesus at Bethany shows us how we should give to God and others. The memory of her extravagant anointing with costly perfumed oil challenges us to consider our own alabaster jar and give our very best to God no matter what others think. What treasure is in your alabaster jar that you might offer to the Lord today?

Read and record Ephesians 5:1-2. Pray that the fragrance of Jesus and the aroma of grace be released from your alabaster jar.

## **DAY TWO**

**Read Matthew 26:14-25**

6. Two days before Passover, Judas went to the chief priests and asked for money to hand Jesus over to them and received thirty pieces of silver (verses 14-16). Judas was personally chosen to be one of the Twelve by Jesus and until now, had been his faithful follower. What could have possibly motivated Judas to betray his teacher and friend?

**NOTE:** In verses 17-19, Christ sends the apostles to find a friend to ask him for a room to celebrate the Passover meal. Jesus speaks of the "appointed time." Jesus knows his hour is at hand and takes firm command of the details that lead toward it. *McBride*

7. At the Last Supper on Holy Thursday evening, Jesus reclined at a table with the Twelve and began to speak to them of his betrayal (verses 20-21). Compare their conversation in verses 21-25 to the account in John 13:22-27. What do you learn from John's account?

**NOTE:** All the Gospels and two thousand years of Christian tradition agree that the Jewish festival of Passover, when the Passover victims were slain, took place on the Thursday of Jesus' last week in Jerusalem, the day before His crucifixion on Friday (Jn 19:31). *Agape*

8. After Jesus said, "The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed," Judas replied, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" (verses 24-25). How would you explain what Jesus' reply, "You have said so," means in this context?

9. "It is a mistake to think that the great privilege of living in company with Jesus is enough to make a person holy. The possibilities to pervert the human heart are truly many." (Pope Benedict, General Audience 10/18/2006). What is one thing you have done to strengthen your faith and will against the weaknesses of the human heart?

10. CONNECTION: The actions of Judas have resonated through the centuries. We all know what it means to be called "a Judas." Pope Francis has said, "Let's think of the little Judases that we all have within ourselves. Every one of us is capable of choosing between loyalty and self-interest. We are each capable of betraying, of selling, of making choices based on our own interests. Where are you, Judas?" (April 8, 2020) What are some small acts of betrayal that are in need of focus in your life?

Read and record Luke 16:10. Write a prayer today to grow in honesty and faithfulness in all the relationships of your life.

### **DAY THREE**

**Read Matthew 26:26-35**

**NOTE:** A unique element in Matthew's account is the interpretation that this action is "on behalf of many, for the forgiveness of sins" (vs 28). The "many" is a Semitic expression meaning "all"; no one is excluded from the saving effects of Jesus' death (see 1:21). Forgiveness is possible even for those who hand Jesus over to death. *Commentary*

11. Today we read that Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, becomes for us the true Body and true Blood of the Savior. Read and record verses 26-28. (Good memory verses)

**NOTE:** "A change takes place in which the whole substance of bread is changed into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood" (*De SS. Eucharistia*). This amazing change is given the name of "transubstantiation".  
*Navarre*

12. With Jesus' own words in verse 29, we understand that in the earthly Eucharist is a true Communion, but our perfect Communion with him in eternity is still coming. What joy that brings to our hearts! How do we fervently prepare ourselves for the reception of Jesus' Body and Blood at each Mass?

**THINK:** After singing a hymn, Jesus and his apostles continued on to the Mount of Olives (verse 30). Reflect on how, just as with Jesus and his apostles, music is an important part of prayer.

13. In verses 31-32, Jesus foretells that his apostles will abandon him, but assures them he will never abandon them. Share a story of your own or of another that touched your heart when God's love became apparent even after turning away from God.

14. In verses 33-35, Jesus' spoken truth does not yet change Peter's heart. Share a time when you also failed to hear or ignored his word.

15. CONNECTION: In our lives we can receive the Eucharist daily if we desire. The bread and the wine disappear, becoming the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. As you reflect on how this truth has revealed itself in your life, there is always more to learn. How can your spirituality grow through this continuing true nourishment?

Read and record John 6:53 and pray today that you can keep growing in God's love and glory with each reception of his body and blood.

#### **DAY FOUR**

**Read Matthew 26:36-46**

**NOTE:** The plan to delay Jesus' arrest and execution until after the festival (verse 5) was not carried out, for according to the synoptics he was arrested on the night of Nisan 14 and put to death the following day. No reason is given why the plan was changed. *NABRE*

16. Later that night after the Last Supper, Jesus went with his disciples to Gethsemane. He asked Peter, James and John to keep watch with him while he went a little farther away from them (verses 36-38). Feeling sorrowful and distressed, he prayed. Record the words of his prayer from verse 39. (Good memory verse)

**THINK:** What similarities do you notice between the prayers of Jesus in the garden and the Our Father (Mathew 6:9-13)?

17. When Jesus returned to his disciples who had fallen asleep, he said to Peter, "So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Jesus withdrew two more times to pray and returned again to find his disciples asleep (verses 40-45). Can you think of a time when someone needed you to "keep watch" with them? Though important, why was that hard to do?

**THINK:** These three disciples also were selected to accompany Jesus for the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37) and the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1). Consider how these events are related.

18. With a "soul" that was "sorrowful even to death," Jesus prayed to his Father three times to "let this cup pass from me" (verses 39,42,44). Luke 22:43-44 describes how an angel was sent from heaven to comfort Jesus who was in such agony that, "his sweat became like drops of blood." What does the agony of Jesus mean to you?

19. Why must Jesus drink from the cup of suffering and wrath? What does this cup represent? Look up one of the following verses to help explain your answer.

Psalms 75:9

Isaiah 51:22

Hebrews 2:10

20. CONNECTION: At the end of our readings today, Jesus announced to his disciples that "the hour is at hand" and that his betrayer had come (verses 45-46). Though he prayed for "this cup to pass," he surrendered to the will of his Father, "not as I will, but as you will" and "your will be done." There is much illness, death, uncertainty, isolation and unrest in our world and lives. Have you been able to surrender to God's will as Jesus did? How did obedience to God's will open you up to new spiritual gifts?

In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read, "For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him." Write a prayer of surrender today to Jesus who drank the cup of God's wrath for you.

## DAY FIVE

### Read Matthew 26:47-56

21. Jesus was speaking with his disciples when Judas approached him with an armed crowd and betrayed him with a kiss. Jesus answered, "Friend, do what you have come for" and they arrested him (verses 47-50). This act has been called "The Judas Kiss." Use a verse from Psalm 55:12-15 to comment on the shocking nature of this act.

22. Read verses 51-52 that describes the scene that followed Jesus' arrest as one of his companions tried to protect him. Compare the account of Jesus' arrest in John 18:1-10 and Luke 22: 51 and note a few differences. How does that affect your understanding of the story?

**NOTE:** The customary romantic picture of Jesus in Gethsemane has him at prayer in splendid isolation. But during the Passover pilgrimage, the Mount of Olives would have been crowded with pilgrims. To prevent confusion and even rioting, Judas and the officials had to have a pre-arranged signal in order to arrest the right man as quickly and smoothly as possible. *Sacra Pagina*

23. In verses 53-56, Jesus faced the violence of the crowd and refused to defend himself with the strength of twelve legions of angels. Why did he say that he would not defend himself?

24. At the end of verse 56 we read, "Then, all the disciples left him and fled." Every one of his closest companions abandoned him to face his accusers and death alone. Have you ever abandoned someone who needed you? What grace from God helped you to rectify your cowardly act?

25. CONNECTION: Jesus greeted Judas saying "Friend, do what you have come for" knowing full well why he had come. In this moment of betrayal, Jesus reached out with kindness and compassion to his disciple, friend and betrayer. "He treats Judas with great gentleness and gives him a chance to open his heart and repent" (Navarre). How can you apply this example of constant forgiveness in your life?

Recall that in Matthew 18:21-22 Peter asked Jesus how often he must forgive his brother and Jesus replied, "not seven times but seventy-seven." Pray today for the grace to reach out with mercy to ask for or grant forgiveness.

## FINAL QUESTION for the WEEK

Reflect on what you have studied this week about the anointing, Last Supper and betrayal and arrest of Jesus. What part of the story was the most moving, shocking or mysterious for you and why?

Read pages 128-133 in the *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to Matthew* by Barbara E. Reid, O.P. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) © 2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

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