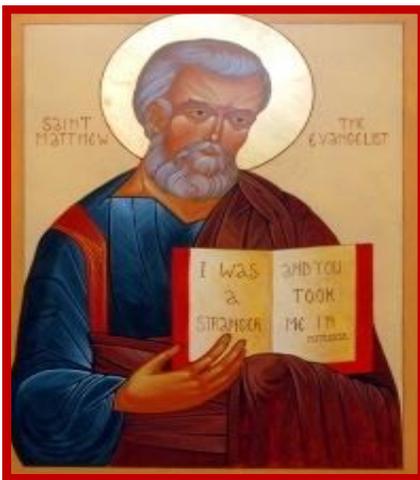


preparation day, that is, the Friday, they prepared food and other necessities for the following day, which was the Sabbath. For on this Sabbath, as being most holy, they abstained from every kind of work, even from preparing food, which was allowable on other festivals.

You will object, 4th That the rulers say in Matt. xxvi. 5, Let us put Christ to death, *but not on the feast day*. I reply that, after the treachery of Judas, they changed their counsel; and they did put Him to death on the feast day.

*The disciples came,—two, says S. Mark; Peter and John, S. Luke. Where?—*this is not to ask the city or town, but the house. They were certain from the Law (Deut. xvi. 5-7) that the Passover could not be offered anywhere save at Jerusalem. The paschal lamb, however, was not immolated in the temple by the priests, but at home, by each master of a household, who for this purpose retained the ancient right of the priesthood, which was originally given to each first-born son of a family. Philo shows this at length (*lib. de Decalogo, sub finem*): “Every one ordinarily sacrifices the Passover without waiting for the priest; for they in this case, by the permission of the Law, discharge the office of the priest.” For the sacrifice of the paschal lamb consisted rather in the eating thereof, than in the immolation. Whence the disciples say, *eat the Passover*. Hence, also, it might be slain, immolated, flayed, and roasted, not indeed by common butchers, but either by a priest, or by that member of a family whom its head should appoint. Thus Peter and John, who were here sent by Christ, killed and made ready the lamb, and prepared the unleavened bread, and the wild herbs with which the lamb was to be eaten. The lamb was wont to be slain at the ninth hour, or three o’clock in the afternoon, as Josephus says (*lib. 7, de Bell. c.17*).



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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

## Matthew 26: 1-17

Douay Rheims Version

*The Jews conspire against Christ. He is anointed by Mary.  
The treason of Judas. The last supper. The prayer in the garden.  
The apprehension of our Lord. His treatment in the house of Caiphas.*

1. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended all these words, he said to his disciples:
2. You know that after two days shall be the pasch: and the Son of man shall be delivered up to be crucified.
3. Then were gathered together the chief priests and ancients of the people, into the court of the high priest, who was called Caiphas:
4. And they consulted together that by subtilty they might apprehend Jesus and put him to death.

2d Rupertus, Jansen, Maldonatus, and Salmeron, who enters at length into the subject (*tract 9, tom. 4*), say that Christ celebrated the Pasch according to the Law on the 14th of Nisan, but that the Jews deferred it until the 15th, an opinion thought to be supported by S. John. For there was a tradition, says Burgensis (*ex Seder Olam*), that if the Passover fell on the Friday, or the preparation for the Sabbath, it was transferred to the following day, which was the Sabbath, or Saturday, lest two solemn festivals, the Passover and the Sabbath, should concur. But this tradition is later than the time of Christ, as may be proved from the Talmud and Aben Ezra.

With these I say that both Christ and the Jews celebrated the Passover on the same day prescribed by the Law, namely, on the 14th day of Nisan, in the evening. That this was so, appears from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who say that Christ celebrated the Passover on the first day of unleavened bread, *on which the Passover must (by the Law) be killed. And on which day they (ie., the Jews) killed the Passover.* Had it been otherwise, the Jews would have proved and condemned Christ to be a transgressor of the Law.

You may object, 1st If Christ celebrated the Passover on the 14th of Nisan, why do Matthew, Mark, and Luke say that He celebrated it on the first day of unleavened bread, which fell upon the fifteenth day? The answer is, as I have already said, that the first day of the azymys was partly the 14th and partly the 15th of Nisan. For that evening on which the Jews celebrated the Passover, with which began the days and the use of unleavened bread, pertained, according to the natural reckoning of time, to the day which preceded the evening, that is, to the 14th of Nisan. But the same evening pertained, according to the festal reckoning, to the day following, which was the 15th of Nisan. And in this sense John says that Christ supped upon the paschal lamb *before the feast of the Passover*, which was the 15th of Nisan, according to the festal reckoning.

You will object, 2d That it is said, John xviii. 28, that the Jews did not enter the *prætorium* lest they should be defiled, but that they being pure, might eat a pure Pasch. I answer, Passover, in that place, does not signify the paschal lamb, for that had been already sacrificed and eaten the evening before, but the other paschal victims, which they were wont to immolate on the seven following days, but especially on the first day of the azymys, that is, on the morning of the 15th day of Nisan, according to the Law.

You will object, 3d John (xix. 21) calls the 15th of Nisan, on which Christ celebrated the paschal supper, the preparation of the Passover. I answer yes, *of the Passover*, that is, *of the Paschal Sabbath*, or the Sabbath which fell within the octave of the Paschal Feast, which was for that reason more thought of than other Sabbaths. As S. John adds by way of explanation, *For that Sabbath-day was a high day.* This appears also from Mark xv. 32, who calls this preparation day *the day before the Sabbath.* For on the

**Verse 17-** *On the first day of unleavened bread, &c.* The Passover was to be eaten with *unleavened*, that is, pure unfermented bread, according to the Law. This abstinence from leaven lasted seven days, and the first day of unleavened bread was the first day of the Passover. The Pasch or Passover was celebrated on the 14th day of the first month, at even ; that is to say, on the full moon of the month called Nisan, which was that in which fell the full moon of the vernal equinox. Wherefore, Nisan answers partly to our March and partly to April.

The following is the chronology of the last eight days of the life of Christ. On the Friday, which was the 8th day of Nisan, He came from Ephrem to Bethany. The next day, being the Sabbath, He supped in the house of Simon the leper. The day following was the 10th of Nisan, and Palm Sunday. On the 11th of Nisan, He taught in the Temple, and cursed the barren fig-tree. On the 12th, He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and spake the parables recorded in S. Matthew xxiv. and xxv. On the 13th of Nisan, or Wednesday, the rulers held their council, when Judas sold Him to them. On the 14th of Nisan, He instituted the Eucharist. On the 15th, He was crucified. The 16th of Nisan was Saturday, when He lay in the tomb. The 17th of Nisan was Easter Sunday.

*On the first day of unleavened bread*, that is, the 14th day of Nisan, or the full moon, Christ about mid-day sent two of His disciples from Bethany to Jerusalem to prepare and roast the paschal lamb, that He might eat it with them in the evening. Here observe, that the first day of unleavened bread is sometimes called the 14th of Nisan and sometimes the 15th. For that evening in which the Jews celebrated the Pasch, with which the days and the eating of unleavened bread commenced, according to the natural computation of time, pertained to the fourteenth day, but according to the computation observed with respect to festivals, it pertained to the following day, or the 15th of Nisan.

You will ask, What was the precise day on which Christ ate the Passover and instituted the Eucharist? Was it the same day on which the Jews kept the Pasch, or was it another? I take it for granted that, according to the belief of the whole Church, Christ was crucified on Friday, and therefore that He ate the paschal lamb at supper the day before, or on Thursday evening.

1st Euthymius and the Greeks say that Christ celebrated the Pasch on the 13th of Nisan; that He anticipated the time fixed by the Law for the Passover, on account of His Passion, which was about to be on the next day, on which the Jews celebrated the Passover. And because the use of azymes, or unleavened bread, began with the Passover on the following day, they think that Christ instituted the Eucharist before the azymes, and in leavened bread. Therefore they celebrate in leavened bread; and they say that this is a command. Whence they condemn the Latins for celebrating in unleavened bread, and call them Azymites and heretics. And they wash their altars before they will celebrate upon them, as deeming them polluted with unleavened bread. They cite in favour of their view S. John xiii. 1, 2, who says, *before the feast of the Passover* (that is, before the fourteenth day of the moon, when they began to eat unleavened bread) Christ made His supper.

5. But they said: Not on the festival day, lest perhaps there should be a tumult among the people.
6. And when Jesus was in Bethania, in the house of Simon the leper,
7. There came to him a woman having an alabaster box of precious ointment and poured it on his head as he was at table.
8. And the disciples seeing it had indignation, saying: To what purpose is this waste?
9. For this might have been sold for much and given to the poor.
10. And Jesus knowing it, said to them: Why do you trouble this woman? For she hath wrought a good work upon me.
11. For the poor you have always with you: but me you have not always.
12. For she in pouring this ointment on my body hath done it for my burial.
13. Amen I say to you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told for a memory of her.
14. Then went one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, to the chief priests.
15. And said to them: What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you? But they appointed him thirty pieces of silver.
16. And from thenceforth he sought opportunity to betray him.
17. And on the first day of the Azymes, the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the pasch?
18. But Jesus said: Go ye into the city to a certain man and say to him: The master saith, My time is near at hand. With thee I make the pasch with my disciples.
19. And the disciples did as Jesus appointed to them: and they prepared the pasch.
20. But when it was evening, he sat down with his twelve disciples.
21. And whilst they were eating, he said: Amen I say to you that one of you is about to betray me.
22. And they being very much troubled began every one to say: Is it I, Lord?
23. But he answering said: He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, he shall betray me.
24. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed. It were better for him, if that man had not been born.
25. And Judas that betrayed him answering, said: Is it I, Rabbi? He saith to him: Thou hast said it.
26. And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke and gave to his disciples and said: Take ye and eat. This is my body.
27. And taking the chalice, he gave thanks and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this.
28. For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.

29. And I say to you, I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I shall drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father.

30. And a hymn being said, they went out unto mount Olivet.

31. Then Jesus saith to them: All you shall be scandalized in me this night. For it is written: I will strike the shepherd: and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed.

32. But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

33. And Peter answering, said to him: Although all shall be scandalized in thee, I will never be scandalized.

34. Jesus said to him: Amen I say to thee that in this night before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me thrice.

35. Peter saith to him: Yea, though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee. And in like manner said all the disciples.

36. Then Jesus came with them into a country place which is called Gethsemani. And he said to his disciples: Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray.

37. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to grow sorrowful and to be sad.

38. Then he saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Stay you here and watch with me.

39. And going a little further, he fell upon his face, praying and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt.

40. And he cometh to his disciples and findeth them asleep. And he saith to Peter: What? Could you not watch one hour with me?

41. Watch ye: and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

42. Again the second time, he went and prayed, saying: My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done.

43. And he cometh again and findeth them sleeping: for their eyes were heavy.

44. And leaving them, he went again: and he prayed the third time, saying the selfsame word.

45. Then he cometh to his disciples and said to them: Sleep ye now and take your rest. Behold the hour is at hand: and the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners.

46. Rise: let us go. Behold he is at hand that will betray me.

47. As he yet spoke, behold Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the ancients of the people.

48. And he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he. Hold him fast.

49. And forthwith coming to Jesus, he said: Hail, Rabbi. And he kissed him.

50. And Jesus said to him: Friend, whereto art thou come? Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and held him.

51. And behold one of them that were with Jesus, stretching forth his hand, drew out his sword: and striking the servant of the high priest, cut off his ear.

52. Then Jesus saith to him: Put up again thy sword into its place: for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

shekels or double *denarii*. I have been the more confirmed in this opinion from seeing in the Church of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem at Rome, together with a portion of the true Cross brought thither by S. Helena, one of those silver pieces for which Christ was sold. This is about the size of a Spanish real, but a little thicker. Hence, also, Zacharias calls the price, ironically, *due* or *fitting*; Ang. Vers. *goodly*. The shekel was equal to a Flemish florin, so that the thirty pieces of silver would be equal to fifteen Flemish florins.

You will ask how could “the potter’s field” be bought for such a sum as this? I answer, that the Heb. *שדה*, *usade*, and the Syr. *ܟܚܟܟܐܠ*, *i.e.*, *a field*, is put for any piece of land, however sandy, stony, or barren, such as sand-pits, which this “field” probably was. It seems to have been useless for agricultural purposes, and of very small value, like the Jewish cemeteries outside the cities of Germany. It is also possible that the rulers may have supplemented the thirty pieces of silver by a grant from the *corbana*, or treasury.

Observe: Joseph being sold by his brethren was a type of this selling of Christ. But Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver, for it was not fitting, says S. Jerome, that the servant should be sold for as much as his Master.

Observe secondly: Judas, according to S. Ambrose, received the tenth part of the price of the ointment with which Christ was anointed, which was valued at 300 *denarii*. But it is more probable that he received the fifth part, for the silver piece of Judas seems to have been, as has been said, a double *denarius*.

Thirdly, because Christ was sold at so vile a price, therefore He deserved to become the price of the whole world, and of all sinners.

Fourthly, because of these thirty pieces of silver, with which Judas and the Jews trafficked for Christ, God smites them with thirty curses in the 109th Psalm. The first is, “Set Thou an ungodly man to be ruler over him.” The second, “Let the devil stand at his right hand.” The third, “When he is judged, let him be condemned.” The fourth, “Let his prayer be turned into sin.” The fifth, “Let his days be few.” The sixth, “His bishopric let another take,” and so on. Lastly, as Hegesippus says, thirty Jews, who were taken captive by Titus, were sold for one *denarius*.

**Verse 16- Sought opportunity**—and found it the following day, being Thursday, which was the first day of unleavened bread. Hear Origen: “Such an opportunity as he sought, Luke explains by saying, *he sought . . . in the absence of the multitude*, that is to say, when the people were not about Him; but He was in private with His disciples. This also he did, betraying Him at night after supper, in the garden of Gethsemane, whither He had retired.”

Satan took bodily possession of Judas, in the same way that he possesses *energumens*, but that he presented reasons suited to his imagination, which induced him to betray Christ, as S. John shows, xiii. 2. The same Evangelist says in the 27th verse, that after supper, when Judas had received the morsel from Christ, Satan entered into him, in order that he might accomplish in act the treachery which he had already purposed in his mind. This expression shows also the horrible atrocity of Judas' wickedness, as though a man were not sufficient for its perpetration, but there were need of the help and instigation of the devil.

**Verse 15-** *And he said unto them, What will ye give me, &c. "Unhappy Judas,"* says S. Jerome, "wishes to recompense himself for the loss which he deemed he had sustained by the pouring forth of the oil, by selling his Master. Nor does he even demand a certain sum, so that his treachery might at least seem profitable, but as though he were disposing of a worthless slave, he left the price to the option of the buyers."

So S. Jerome, who thinks that Judas did not stipulate for any fixed sum, but left it to be determined by the rulers, as though he had said, "Give me what you will." But others, with greater probability, say that Judas bargained with the rulers thus, "I will sell Christ to you, but for so great a person, and for one whom you hate so much, I demand a suitable price. How much will ye give me?"

*Thirty pieces of silver.* See the vileness of Judas in valuing Christ, the Saviour of the world, his Master and his Lord, for such a miserable sum. This vileness afflicted Christ with great sorrow. Wherefore S. Ambrose says (*lib. de Spirit. Sanct. c. 18*) "O Judas, the traitor, thou valuest the ointment of His Passion at 300 *denarii*, and His Passion itself at thirty,—rich in valuing, cheap in crime!"

You will ask what was the weight and value of these thirty pieces of silver. Baronius (*ex Helia in Tisbi, R. David, and other more modern Rabbins*) thinks that the silver piece of Zechariah and the prophets, and consequently of this passage of S. Matthew, as is plain from xxvii 9, is a pound of silver. This would amount to about 1000 Flemish florins. But who can believe that the covetous Jews would pay such a sum to Judas, of his own accord making the offer, not to sell, but only to betray and guide them to a man who was daily to be met with, especially since the Fathers and Zechariah marvel at the price as being so small and poor?

With greater probability, Maldonatus and others understand thirty shekels to be here intended, which would be equal in value to thirty Flemish florins. This was the price at which a slave, who had been killed, was estimated, according to the law in Exod. xxi. 32. Thus the life of Christ was valued by Judas and the Jews at the same price as that of a slave.

But since Jeremiah (xxxii. 9) distinguishes the *stater*, or the shekel, which is the Hebrew word, from the silver piece, for he says, "Weigh for it the silver, seven staters and ten silver pieces" (*Vulg. following the Heb. See also the margin of the English Version*), it would seem more probable that these silver pieces of Judas were half

53. Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and he will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels?

54. How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that so it must be done?

55. In that same hour, Jesus said to the multitudes: You are come out, as it were to a robber, with swords and clubs to apprehend me. I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple: and you laid not hands on me.

56. Now all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then the disciples, all leaving him, fled.

57. But they holding Jesus led him to Caiphas the high priest, where the scribes and the ancients were assembled.

58. And Peter followed him afar off, even to the court of the high priest, And going in, he sat with the servants, that he might see the end.

59. And the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death.

60. And they found not, whereas many false witnesses had come in. And last of all there came two false witnesses:

61. And they said: This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and after three days to rebuild it.

62. And the high priest rising up, said to him: Answerest thou nothing to the things which these witness against thee?

63. But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest said to him: I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ the Son of God.

64. Jesus saith to him: Thou hast said it. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven.

65. Then the high priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed: What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy.

66. What think you? But they answering, said: He is guilty of death.

67. Then did they spit in his face and buffeted him. And others struck his face with the palms of their hands,

68. Saying: Prophecy unto us, O Christ. Who is he that struck thee?

69. But Peter sat without in the court. And there came to him a servant maid, saying: Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean.

70. But he denied before them all, saying: I know not what thou sayest.

71. And as he went out of the gate, another maid saw him; and she saith to them that were there: This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth.

72. And again he denied with an oath: I know not the man.

73. And after a little while, they came that stood by and said to Peter: Surely thou also art one of them. For even thy speech doth discover thee.

74. Then he began to curse and to swear that he knew not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

75. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus which he had said: Before the cock crew, thou wilt deny me thrice. And going forth, he wept bitterly.

**Verse 1-** *And it came to pass, when He had finished, or completed,* all that He had spoken in the last chapter concerning, the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, then He girded Himself to meet His Passion, which was nigh at hand, and foretold it. He would not seem to be ignorant of the things which were shortly to come to pass, whilst He prophesied of those in the far distant future. He would not have His disciples suppose that Christ was ignorant of the things which were to befall Him, or that they happened to Him against His will; but that they might know that all was foreseen by Him. The meaning is, as S. Thomas expresses it, “When Christ had fulfilled His office as a Teacher, He began to prepare Himself for the office of a Redeemer and a Saviour.”

**Verse 2-** *Ye know, &c., after two days.* He said, therefore, these things on the Tuesday evening, when, after the Hebrew custom, the fourth day of the week, or Wednesday, was about to begin. This was the reckoning employed with respect to festivals. For, as Pererius says (*on Gen. i. 5, on the words*, “The evening and the morning were one day”), “It is certain that the ancient Jews reckoned their days by a threefold method.” First, the legal day from evening to evening. Secondly, the natural day from sunrise to sunrise. Thirdly, the common day from midnight to midnight. Wherefore Christ saith truly, After two days shall be the feast of the Passover, because after two days, that is to say, Wednesday and Thursday, on the evening of Thursday, when Friday is about to begin, is the Passover.

*The Passover.* This means in Hebrew, *passing over*, because the angel passed over the houses of the Hebrews. For *pasach* means *to pass over*. But the Syrians write *pascha* not with *samech*, as the Hebrews, but with *tsade*, and then *pascha* signifies joy and gladness, for the feast of the Passover was a time of utmost joyfulness.

**Verse 3-** *Then were gathered together, &c. Then* means on the morning of the fourth day of the week, or Wednesday. It was on the morning of this day that Judas came to them, and sold Christ to them for the stipulated price of thirty *denarii*, according to the general opinion of the Church, and as the same may be gathered from S. Matthew’s narrative. Wherefore from this council of the Jews, and selling of Jesus, the ancient Christians were accustomed to fast on Wednesday, as S. Augustine testifies (*Epist. 86*). Moreover, the Greeks, and many inhabitants of Poland and Holland, still abstain from eating flesh on Wednesday, because on that day the flesh of Christ was sold.

Observe, we gather from S. Matthew’s narrative that on these two days—Wednesday and Thursday—Christ did not come into Jerusalem, as He had done on the Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, but remained at Bethany, and only returned to Jerusalem towards the evening of Thursday, that He might celebrate the Passover.

**Verse 4-** *Take Jesus by subtilty*—by subtilty, because they were afraid lest Christ should take Himself out of their hands, as He had done before. Again, they seek a stratagem, that they might seize Him without a tumult of the people. For they were afraid lest the people, hanging upon the words of Christ, as a very great prophet, might fight for Him, and not suffer Him to be taken. Wherefore it follows,

Somewhat differently Nonnus Panopolitanus, who read with the Vulg. *ἵνα τηζήσῃ, that she may keep*, “Account this woman’s gift free from all blame, so that she may keep and preserve the treasure of My body until the hour of My death and preparation for burial be come.”

**Verse 13-** *Verily I say unto you . . . for a memorial of her,* i.e., of Mary Magdalene, not of Christ, as is shown by the fem. pronoun *αὐτῆς*. This anointing and pious devotion shall be celebrated throughout the whole world for the everlasting praise and honour of Mary, and for the infamy of Judas, who found fault with her. Victor of Antioch paraphrases as follows, “So far am I from condemning her as though she had done amiss, or blaming her as though she had not acted aright, that I will never suffer this deed of hers to be forgotten in all time to come. Yea, the whole world shall know what she did in a house and in obscurity. For she did it with a pious mind, and with fervent faith and a contrite heart. What was done was pleasing, not so much because of the money that was spent, as because of the faith which she offered together with the ointment. For this was to Me as the most fragrant of all odours.”

**Verse 14-** *Then went away (abijt) one of the twelve, &c.* The word *then* refers partly to what has immediately preceded, and partly to the council of the rulers about taking Christ in the 16th verse. It means that on the Saturday before Palm Sunday, when Judas, the instigator of the murmuring, found himself rebuked by Christ, he did not repent as the other Apostles, whom he had misled, did, but *then* he made his forehead brazen, and clothed himself with the cloak of impudence, and, mad with covetousness and wickedness, he determined to sell and betray Christ to the Jews. Therefore, on the following Wednesday, when the rulers were taking counsel as to the way in which they might lay hold on Christ, he came to them, and suggested a method, and stipulated to deliver Him into their hands for thirty pieces of silver.

*One of the twelve.* An Apostle, not one even of Christ’s seventy disciples, or He might the better have borne it, but one of the twelve Apostles, and of His own most intimate friends, whom He had elevated to that lofty rank. So this was the dark ingratitude and wickedness of Judas, which pierced the heart of Christ, so that He said, “If mine enemy had spoken evil of Me, I would have borne it,” &c. “But thou, the man united to me, my guide and my familiar friend! We took sweet counsel together, and walked in the house of God by consent” (*Ps. lv. 13, &c*). Wherefore S. Augustine (*Tract. 61 in Joan.*) says, “*One* by vocation, not by predestination; in number, not in merit; in body, not in spirit; in appearance, not in reality.”

*He went away.* Satan having entered into him, as Mark has, not that Satan insinuated himself into the soul of Judas, and so inclined his will and intellect to betray Christ. For God alone is able to glide into the soul, as Didymus rightly teaches (*Tract. 3, de Spiritu Sancto*). Neither was it that

murmuring,—said, *Why trouble ye, &c.* Arab. *Why do you blame? A good work; καλόν, i.e., fair, honourable, worthy of highest praise.* For what can be more worthy and honourable than to anoint the feet of God? Who would not account himself happy if he might but touch and kiss the feet of Christ?

**Verse 11-** *The poor ye have always, &c.* The world is full of poor, to whom ye may always do good; but I, after six days, am about to die, and go away to Heaven, so that ye will not be able either to see Me or to touch Me. Suffer then this woman's act of service towards Me. In six days ye would vainly desire to do the like.

**Verse 12-** *For My burial.* Christ might have excused Mary because of the excellence of His Divine Person, which was anointed by her, which made it more meritorious to expend the price of the ointment upon Him than upon feeding the poor, as Theophylact teaches. And the same argument holds good in the present day with respect to the adornment of temples, altars, chalices, &c. For this is done in honour of the person of Christ, to stir up the devotion and reverence of others towards Him, when there is no special necessity calling for the relief of the poor. Or Christ might have excused her, because she performed this anointing out of gratitude, piety, reverence. But out of modesty He was unwilling to make use of these pleas. His only ground of defence is, *she did it for My burial*, that He might show that His death was at hand, and that He was willing and ready to die, yea, that He had ordained the anointing with a view to His death, and so permitted the consequent betrayal of Judas. For Christ very greatly longed for His death, for the glory of God and the redemption of men. At the same time He, as it were, pricks Judas; as S. Chrysostom says, "I am troublesome and burdensome to you, but wait a little while, and I will depart hence. But take thou care lest, by betraying Me, thou promotest My death, lest thou bring death and hell upon thyself." The Syriac adds, *She did it as if for My burial*, because Mary did not intend to anoint Him for burial; but the Holy Ghost, knowing what was about to take place, inwardly moved her to do what she did.

Christ therefore excuses her because of her inward affection of charity, because of the peculiar circumstances and the unique occasion, and especially because the Holy Ghost guided her, although she knew not what she did. For she anointed Him as though He had been on the very point of being buried. She could not anoint Him for burial after He was dead, because she was anticipated by Joseph of Arimathea. So Mark says distinctly, *She hath done what she could; she is come aforehand to anoint My body for the burial.* S. John has, *Let her alone, that she may keep (ut servet) it for the day of My burial (Vulg.).* The Greek is in the past tense, *she hath kept it.* As though He had said, "Suffer her, O Judas, to obey the instinct of her devotion, that she may anoint Me yet alive, though so soon about to die, for she will not be able to do it after I am dead." So Vatablus. Otherwise Maldonatus, *That she may keep it*, "She has so bestowed this ointment in anointing Me that she cannot lose it." As if one should say that he had kept his money who had bought a field with it; for if he had hidden it in a coffer, he might have lost it. *That she may keep it*—that she may be proved to have kept it (Franc. Lucas).

**Verse 5-** *For they said, &c.* It was not, therefore, out of regard for the festival, but from fear of the people, that they were unwilling to take Jesus on the feast of the Passover. For at this feast a countless multitude of Jews flocked together to Jerusalem, among whom were many who had received salvation both of body and soul from Jesus, who, they feared, would defend Him. Wherefore, "They had no zeal for devotion, but for wickedness," says S. Jerome. In like manner, Herod Agrippa did not wish to put Peter to death until after the Passover (*Acts xii.*). For the Passover was to the Jews a festival of liberty and joy, because in it they celebrated their deliverance from the slavery of Egypt. Whence they were accustomed to release condemned persons at that time, as they released Barabbas. The rulers, therefore, had decreed to take Christ and put Him to death after the Passover; but in consequence of the treachery of Judas, they changed their purpose. For the counsel and purpose of God was, that Christ should die at the Passover, in order that He might show that the antitype answered to its type. For the sacrifice of a lamb, which took place at the Passover, was a type that Christ would be sacrificed at that feast. By this circumstance God signified that Christ was the very Paschal Lamb, who suffered upon the cross for the redemption of the world.

**Verse 6-** *In the house of Simon the leper.* Matthew repeats more circumstantially things which had already happened, in order to relate the manner in which Christ was taken. For Judas was moved to betray Christ to the Jews by the occasion of this ointment, that he might by his treachery recover the price of the ointment, and, like a thief, as he was, hide it in his coffers. This feast, when Christ was in the house of Simon, took place on the day before Palm Sunday, as is plain from S. John xii. 1, where it is said, *six days before the Passover*, which was Friday, *He came to Bethany.* And it is added, *they made Him a feast*, that is, Simon and his friends. This was on the Saturday, or the Sabbath; and the next day was Palm Sunday.

*Simon the leper.* Some of the Fathers are of opinion that Simon had really been a leper, and had been healed by Christ. Others think that Leper was a patronymic of the family of Simon, either because he was descended from a leper, or because of some connection with lepers. Thus there were at Rome the families of the Claudii (*the Lame*), and the Balbi (*the Sutterers*), although there were many members of those families who were neither lame nor stutterers.

**Verse 7-** *There came to Him a woman, &c.* This was the same feast as that which S. John gives an account of (xii. 1), as will be seen by comparing these two Evangelists. S. Matthew relates it in order to explain the occasion of Judas' being moved to betray Christ, as I have said.

You may object that John says, *They made Him a feast, and Martha served*, which might seem to intimate that the feast was in Martha's house, not in

Simon's. I reply by denying the inference. John does not say that Martha and Mary made Him a feast, but simply, *they*, that is, some persons, *made one*. The persons meant were the inhabitants of Bethany, friends of Jesus, prominent among whom was this Simon the leper. But Martha ministered at this supper, either because she was a neighbour, or because she was a friend and relative of Simon.

*A woman.* Mary Magdalene, as S. John says expressly (xii. 3), who, as she had two years before this repented, and washed the feet of Jesus with her tears, and anointed them with ointment, so upon this occasion likewise, six days before His death, she did the same thing, partly from devotion, and partly by an inspiration from God, as a kind of prophecy of Christ's rapidly approaching death and burial.

*Alabaster.* Vessels made of alabaster, or onyx stone, which Pliny says was an excellent material for preserving ointment incorrupt (*lib. 36, cap. 8*), were made use of for this purpose. Wherefore it is not surprising that this hollow vessel, which was as thin and brittle as glass, might easily be broken by Mary Magdalene, by striking it with a small hammer, so that she might pour the whole of the ointment upon the head of Christ. Unless you prefer to think, with Suidas, that this so-called alabaster box was a clear vessel without a handle, such as chemists have in their shops to keep unguents and drugs in.

S. Epiphanius (*lib. de Mensuris*) says, "This box was a small glass vessel of ointment, containing a pound of oil. It was called alabaster because of its brittleness."

*Ointment.* I have shown on Eccles. ix. 8 that the Jews followed the custom of the Arabians, Persians, Syrians, and other Eastern nations in making use of unguents at their feasts for purposes of refreshment, and as a hindrance to drunkenness. Moreover, those ointments were not unfrequently not thick, such as those which doctors make use of for blows and wounds, but in a liquid state. They were confections of odoriferous herbs, which refreshed and delighted the brain and the other parts of the body. This particular ointment was fluid spikenard, as we learn from S. John. Spikenard has a very sweet smell, and abounds in Syria. Whence Tibullus, "His temples lately moist with *Tyrian* (or better, *Syrian*) nard." It is certain that spikenard compounded with oil formed a very precious ointment, which the ancients made use of for anointing the head. (*See Plin. lib. xiii. caps. 1 and 2.*)

*Precious;* Gr. βαζυτιμου, *of great price*; lit. *heavy*, because money was formerly estimated according to weight, as by the ounce, the pound. The Syriac adds, *it was very sweet*; S. Mark says, *spicati* (Vulg.); S. John, *pistici*. I will explain the meaning of these words in S. John xii. 3.

*Upon His head.* You will say that John has, *she anointed the feet of Jesus*, &c. I answer that Mary Magdalene first anointed the feet of Christ and then poured all the contents of the vessel upon His head. To do this she broke off the narrow neck of the bottle, as we gather from S. Mark. So S. Augustine (*lib. de Consens. Evangel. 79*). John adds, *she wiped His feet*, that is, before she anointed them, to cleanse them from

dust. For Jesus went about with the upper part of His feet uncovered, as I have shown, x. 10. So Toletus. But if any one shall maintain that she wiped Christ's feet after the anointing, in order to dry them, I offer no objection. John, in order to show the surpassing excellence of the ointment, adds, *And the house was filled with the odour*. In the Magdalene, therefore, was fulfilled the words of Canticles i. 12, "When the king was on his couch my spikenard gave its odour" (Vulg.). Also, "Thy name is as oil poured forth."

*Tropologically:* Origen says that oil or ointment is the work of virtue, especially of mercy. If this be shown out of natural compassion, as it is by infidels, not for God's sake, God accepts it indeed, but not unto life eternal. But if it be done from love to God, it is an excellent ointment of a sweet-smelling savour. Again, if a good work be done to relieve the wants of the poor, it is an anointing of the *feet* of the Lord. For the poor in the Church are the mystical feet of the Lord. But if the work be done for the glory of God, as in the way of zeal for chastity, fasting, or prayer, it is an anointing of the Lord's head, a precious ointment, with whose odour the whole Church is filled; and this is the proper work of the perfect.

2d The *Gloss* says, "This woman who anointed the head and feet of Christ signifies the faith of the Church, which, when it preaches and invokes the Godhead of Christ, anoints His head: when it preaches His humanity, His feet."

Lastly, he *anoints the feet*, who in an active life serves his neighbour; but he *the head*, who cleaves to God by contemplation, and becomes one spirit with Him.

**Verse 8-** *When the disciples saw it*, &c. You may say that S. John speaks only of Judas as murmuring. S. Augustine (*lib. 2, de Consens. Evang. c. 69*) says that Judas was the leader and inciter of this murmuring, who stirred up the other Apostles, in the pretence of pity for the poor, to indignation, which in their case flowed from a real affection of pity, but with him was a mere pretence, springing from avarice.

**Verse 9-** *Sold for much . . . three hundred denarii*, as Mark has. Judas meant to say that this ointment ought not to have been used for luxury and pleasure upon the head of Christ, but ought to have been poured into the lap of many poor, to relieve their wants. This was the opinion of Calvin, who, lest any one should make use of the "example of Mary Magdalene to approve of funereal honours, in the way of lights, incense, and other like observances, says that this action of hers must neither be approved nor imitated, but only defended, as done by a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost. But who cannot see that the spirit of Judas and Calvin are identical, and that the same Satan speaks by Calvin who erst spake by Judas, whom Christ proceeds to confute?

**Verse 10-** *But Jesus knowing*, &c.,—by the Divine Spirit their secret