

Gospel text

Matthew 26: 14 - 27: 66

26, 14 Then one of the Twelve, the one called Judas Iscariot, went to the high priests 15 to say to them, "How much will you give me, if I betray him to you?" They collected the equivalent of five hundred dollars in today's currency. 16 From then on, he looked for the right moment to hand them over.

17 On the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples went to Jesus and asked him, "Where do you want us to prepare you to eat for Passover?" 18 The latter replied, "Go into town to such and such a place, and say to him, 'The master says to you: my time is near, it is at your house that I want to celebrate the Passover with my disciples'." 19 The disciples did as Jesus commanded them and prepared the Passover.

20 In the evening, when he was lying down with the Twelve 21 and eating, he said: "Truly, I assure you, one of you will betray me. 22 Heavily grieved, the disciples each began to ask him, "Could it be me, master?" 23 In response, Jesus said, "The one who betrays me is the one who put his hand with me in the dish. 24 Certainly, according to the Scriptures, the new Adam is called to die, but I pity this man who betrayed this new Adam: it would have been better for this man not to be born". 25 In turn Judas asked, "Is it me, Rabbi?" Jesus replied, "You said so".

26 While they were eating, after taking bread and saying the blessing, Jesus broke it and shared it with the disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my body." 27 After taking the cup and giving thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink in all, 28 this is my blood of covenant, shed so that a large part of humanity will return from its waywardness". 29 He added, "From now on, I will no longer drink the product of the vine with you, until the day when I drink something new in my father's world." 30 After singing hymns, they left for the Garden of Olives.

31 Then Jesus said to them, "All of you are going to stumble tonight because of me, for it is written:

I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will disperse.

32 And after returning from the dead, I will go before you into Galilee". 33 But Peter retorted, "Even if everyone stumbles because of you, I will never stumble". 34 Jesus continues, "Truly, I assure you, that very night, before the rooster crows, you will have denied knowing me three times". 35 Peter objected, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny knowing you". The disciples all said the same thing.

36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit down while I go away to pray". 37 Having taken Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him, Jesus began to be sad and to be tormented. 38 Then he said to them, "My being is sad to die. Stay here and stay awake with me". 39 He stepped forward and fell face down on the ground, praying, "Father, if possible, may I avoid this cup. However, may happen not what I want, but what you want". 40 Jesus returned to his disciples and found them asleep. He said, "So, weren't you able to stay awake for one hour with me? 41 Stay awake and pray that you will not be put to the test. Because although the spirit is well disposed, the flesh is however weak". 42 For a second time, Jesus went away again to pray and ask, "Father, if it is not possible to avoid drinking all this, then may what you want come true". 43 On returning, he finds them again asleep, eyes heavy. 44 Again Jesus left them and went away to pray and ask the same thing for the third time. 45 Finally, he came back to the disciples and said to them, "You can now sleep and rest. The hour is near at hand when the new Adam is put into the hands of wicked people. 46 Go, wake up. Here comes the one who hands me over to the authorities".

47 He was still talking when Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived from the high priests and the elders of the people with a large crowd carrying swords and sticks. 48 The one who was going to hand him over to them had agreed on a sign: "The one I will kiss is him, grab him." 49 He immediately approached Jesus to say to him, "Hello, Rabbi!" Then he kissed him. 50 Jesus answered him, "My friend, go on with what you have to do". So they came near to take Jesus. 51 At that time, drawing his sword, one of Jesus' companions struck the servant of the high priest and removed his ear. 52 But Jesus said to him, "Put the sword back into its sheath. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 Don't you know that I could call on my father to send me more than twelve legions of angels right now? 54 But then how will the Scriptures, which explain the reason for these things, become fully intelligible?" 55 Then Jesus addressed the crowd, "Why did you come out with swords and sticks to catch me, as if I were a thief? Yet I sat in the temple every day teaching, and you did not take hold of me. 56 All of these events provide a full understanding of the scriptures of the prophets". At that time, all the disciples left him and fled.

57 After taking him, they brought him to the high priest Caiaphas, where scribes and elders were gathered. 58 Peter followed him from a distance to the interior courtyard of the high priest. Once inside, he was seated with the servants to see the outcome.

59 The high priests and the whole Sanhedrin sought a false witness against Jesus in order to be able to put him to death, 60 but they did not find any, even if several appeared to testify falsely against him. At the end, there were two 61 who said, "This man proclaimed: I am capable of destroying the temple, and in three days rebuilding it". 62 The high priest stood up and said, "You answer nothing to those who testify against you?" 63 Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the messiah, the son of God". 64 Jesus answers him: "You said it. However, I declare it:

From now on you will see the new Adam, sharing the authority of God, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

65 At that time, the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He insulted God. Why are we still looking for witnesses? You see! Now you have heard the insult. 66 What do you think?" Then they replied, "He deserves death. "

67 Then they spat on his face and punched him, and others slapped him, 68 saying, "Be a prophet for us, messiah, who struck you?"

69 Peter was sitting outside in the palace courtyard. A servant came up to him and said, "You were with Jesus the Galilean". 70 In front of all Peter denied, "I don't know what you mean". 71 As he went out the big door, another servant saw him and addressed those who were there, "This one was with Jesus the Nazorean." 72 Again Peter denied with an oath, "I don't know this man." 73 After a while, the people standing there said to Peter, "Yes, you too are one of them. Besides, your accent betrays you". 74 At that moment Peter began to fulminate and swear that he did not know the man. And immediately the rooster crowed.

75 It was then that Peter remembered the word of Jesus: before a rooster crows, three times you will have denied knowing me. After going outside, he cried bitterly.

27, 1 At dawn all the high priests and the elders of the people counseled against Jesus on how to put him to death. 2 After binding him, they took him away and delivered him to Governor Pilate.

3 Meanwhile, Judas, after seeing that the man he had handed over to the authorities, had been condemned, repented and went to return the five hundred dollars to the high priests and elders 4 with these words, "I have wandered by handing over an innocent being". They replied, "What do you want us to do? It is your problem". 5 After throwing the money into the temple, he went to hang himself. 6 Collecting the money, the high priests said to themselves, "It is not permissible to deposit this in the treasury of the temple, because it is the wages of the blood." 7 After taking advice, they bought the potter's field with the money for the burial of foreigners. 8 This is why this field has been called "Field of Blood" to this day. 9 Then was understood the word of Jeremiah the prophet, who said,

They took the thirty pieces of silver, the wages estimated by the sons of Israel. 10 They used it for the potter's field, as the Lord had commanded.

11 Jesus stood before the governor. The latter asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "You say so". 12 Faced with the accusations of the high priests and the elders, he answered nothing. 13 Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear all those who testify against you?" 14 But Jesus did not answer, so the governor was greatly surprised.

15 At the Passover holiday, the governor used to release a prisoner the crowd chose. 16 Now there was a famous prisoner called [Jesus] Barabbas. 17 When the people were gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to set you free, [Jesus] Barabbas or Jesus called messiah?" 18 For he knew that he had been handed over out of jealousy.

19 While he was in court, his wife sent him a message that said, "Have nothing to do with this righteous man. Because today I was very upset by a dream about it". 20 But the high priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to demand Barabbas and destroy Jesus. 21 The governor asked them, "Which of the two do you want me to set you free?" People said, "Barabbas." 22 Pilate said to them, "What shall I do then with Jesus, called the Messiah?" All replied, "Let him be crucified." 23 Pilate continued, "But what did he do wrong?" They shouted more violently, "Let him be crucified." 24 Realizing that there was no point in continuing, but that things were getting worse, Pilate took some water and washed his hands in front of the crowd with these words: "I am innocent of this blood. It's up to you". 25 All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children." 26 Then he released Barabbas to them, and after having Jesus flogged, he delivered them up to be crucified.

27 The governor's soldiers then took Jesus to the courtroom and assembled the entire cohort. 28 After stripping him naked, they put a scarlet coat on him, 29 then, after weaving a crown from thorns, they put it on his head and a reed in his right hand. Kneeling before him, they laughed, "Hello, king of the Jews". 30 They spit on him and struck him on the head with the reed. 31 After having laughed at him, they took off his purple cloak and gave him his own cloak, and took him away to crucify him. 32 When they came out, they found a man from Cyrene by the name of Simon. They requisitioned him to carry his cross.

33 When they came to a place called Golgotha, that is to say the place of the skull, 34 they gave him wine to drink mixed with gall. After tasting it, he didn't want it. 35 After crucifying him, they divided his clothes by drawing lots. 36 And seated they kept watch. 37 His indictment was laid over his head and reads as follows: This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.

38 They then crucify with him two bandits, one on the right, the other on the left. 39 The passers-by cursed him, waving their heads 40 and saying, "You who destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, set yourself free, if you are a son of God, and come down from the cross." 41 In the same way, the high priests with the scribes and the elders mocked with these words, 42 "He has freed others, he is not even able to free himself. He is king of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and then we will believe in him. 43 He trusted God, let Him set him free now if He cares for him. For did he not say: I am a son of God?" 44 The bandits who had been crucified with him cursed him just as much.

45 From midday the darkness spread over the whole earth until three o'clock. 46 At around three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice:

"Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani? "

that is to say :

"My God, my God, why did you abandon me? "

47 People who stood there heard him and said, "He is calling Elijah that one." 48 One of them quickly ran up and, after putting a sponge filled with vinegar around a reed, gave him a drink. 49 The others said, "Leave it, let's see if Elijah comes to set him free." 50 Again Jesus cried out in a loud voice and gave up the spirit.

51 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in half from top to bottom, the earth began to tremble and the stones to split, 52 the tombs opened and several bodies of the saints, who had fallen asleep, awoke, 53 emerged from the tombs after waking up and entered the holy city to be seen by many people. 54 The centurion and those who kept Jesus with him were greatly frightened when they saw the earthquake and all these events, and said to themselves, "Truly, this guy was the son of God."

55 There were several women watching from a distance, some of whom had followed Jesus from Galilee to support him, 56 among whom were Mary of Magdala and Mary, mother of James and Joseph, as well as the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

57 When evening came, a rich man from Arimathea, called Joseph, who had also become a disciple of Jesus, presented himself 58 to Pilate to claim the body of Jesus. Pilate then ordered to give it back 59 and, after taking the body, Joseph rolled it up in a fine, unblemished cloth 60 and placed it in the new tomb, which had been carved in stone for him, then after having rolled a large stone at the door of the tomb, he left. 61 Mary Magdalene and another Mary were there, seated before the sepulcher.

62 The next day, the day after Preparation, the high priests and the Pharisees gathered at Pilate's house 63 to say to him, "Lord, remember what this impostor said while he was still alive, 'I will return to life after three days'. 64 So order that the sepulcher be watched for three days to prevent his disciples from stealing him and then saying to the crowd, 'He is risen from the dead', and the latter imposture would be worse than the former". 65 Pilate replied, "Take a guard. Go, watch the tomb as you see fit". 66 After returning to the tomb, they sealed the stone and posted a guard there.

Gospel commentary - Homily

A meaning to suffering?

How touching was the scene of their wedding. She was twenty-three years old, he had just turned twenty-four. They had prepared their celebration together. The entrance music was like them, young, but serious. During their love declaration before the assembly, Barbara while crying told him how she could never have imagined finding herself one day with him in this place, how she loved him with all her being, and would love him for life. David gave the same testimony. The start of their marriage was demanding. Having been trained as a carpenter, David found work in a door factory, but two hundred miles from their relatives and friends. Barbara was still studying and enrolled at the local university. Not very happy in this environment, they returned to their alma mater. He found himself a new job, she pursued new studies, and finally entered the job market. The time was ripe for them to buy their first house which Barbara took the trouble to design so that it was beautiful and functional. And a few years later, they were ready for this child they wanted from all their heart. Unfortunately, nature did not collaborate. For some time, assisted procreation was considered. And suddenly, miracle, she is pregnant. Thus was born Charlotte. Could they be happier?

It was without factoring in illness. David knew his father had manic depression, also known as bipolar disorder. He knew himself to have attention deficit syndrome. The birth of Charlotte and the requirements of parental responsibility would reveal that he was also suffering from the same illness as his father. This was confirmed by the psychiatrist. Meanwhile, his employer, frustrated by his frequent oversights, fired him. Here he is depressed, unemployed, unable even to take care of Charlotte. Barbara, responsible for family income alone, feels her frustration growing up. The cocktail of drugs eventually control David's moods, but are incompatible with those who could control his attention deficit: impossible to trust him, especially in the care given to Charlotte. Since he came from a dysfunctional family, we had never dealt with this deficiency, which worsened over time. The exchanges in the couple are increasingly violent, the two suffer, and Charlotte, who is now three and a half, cries and begs them to stop. This is when Barbara makes a decision: she will go back to her parents with her daughter. Besides, hadn't her mother taken care of Charlotte's day care since the age of one? And as she had compassion for David and did not want him homeless, she leaves him temporarily the house and will look after him financially until he gets back on his feet and finds a job. In addition, he can see his daughter as often as he wants. Still, her heart is in tatters when her daughter says to her crying, "Why can't you live with dad in the same house?" She knows it is no longer possible. The two suffer too much together. He is no longer the man she married. He is no longer an equal she has before him, but a quasi-child. When they find themselves alone in the same room, the atmosphere is explosive. And the two agree to find the situation irreparable. Meanwhile, Charlotte has resumed the desire to sing in the large warm house of the grandparents, even if, on certain days, she lets her mother know the anger that inhabits her regarding her parents failure.

I wanted to take the time to tell this story, because it reflects the complexity of life. We are faced with a situation where we cannot point the finger at a culprit, where, no matter which side we look at, no simple solution appears, where all the actors in the drama suffer enormously. Several readers will recognize their own situation here. In this context, let us try to read again this narrative of Matthew's passion to seek some light and the strength to look to the future.

Let us remember that in our biblical analysis, we underlined that the evangelist Matthew is a suffering Jew. He belongs to the chosen people, to this people that God has chosen to reveal his love, to this people to which God has raised up a whole line of

prophets, to this people to whom God has promised a messiah. And now his own people rejected the prophet among the prophets, the promised messiah, the true face of this God whom they claim to serve. One of the disciples betrayed his master for the equivalent of five hundred dollars, another was afraid and denied him. Such a waste! What a terrible figure of human reality! His suffering is real. We notice this suffering in his way of emphasizing the guilt of Judas and Peter, and in his way of showing that it is consciously that his people preferred Barabbas to Jesus. And in most of his scenes, people suffer: when he realizes what he has done, Judas will suffer so much that he will not be able to face what he has done, and will kill himself; Peter, for his part, wept bitterly.

For his part, how did Jesus experience his suffering according to Matthew? The first thing we notice is that he did not deny it, but that he faced it straight: in all lucidity, he said, "Really, I assure you, one of you will betray me"; to his disciples he said: "All of you are going to stumble this night because of me"; to Peter, who was ready to die for him, he said, "Truly, I assure you, that very night, before the rooster crows, you will have denied knowing me three times". On the cross, there is this cry from Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" Which is, according to the evangelists, a reflection of his suffering.

The second thing we notice, and this is a typical emphasis from Matthew, is that Jesus needs others, he needs a community to support him, "My being is sad to die. Stay here and stay awake with me". And it is with sadness that he must see how difficult it is for them to support him, "So, you weren't able to stay awake for one hour with me?"

There is finally a third thing that we notice and which is very difficult to explain: he knew how to find a meaning in his suffering. This is what Matthew alludes to when he puts in Jesus' mouth this sentence when he shares the cup of wine: "This is my blood of covenant, shed so that a large part of humanity will return of his waywardness". According to him, all this suffering will not be useless, but will contribute to the fact that many find their lives again. It is in the same vein that we must read his many quotes from the prophets Jeremiah, Isaiah, Zechariah to describe the last moments of Jesus, in particular his silence throughout his trial, like a suffering servant (object of contempt, abandoned by men, a man of pain, familiar with suffering, Is 53: 3), about whom the prophet says, "The punishment that gives us peace is upon him, and in his wounds we find healing", Is 53: 5.

But what makes Jesus believe that suffering can be the source of life? According to Matthew, it is his faith in a God he calls: Father. Thus, in the depths of his anguish, he puts in the mouth of Jesus this word: "My father, if it is not possible to avoid drinking all this, then may what you want come true". This sentence says this: I wish I did not have to live all this suffering, but I believe that you are the source of all life, and that no event at this moment will prevent life from arising and bursting. This is how a human being is able to accept suffering, if he believes that it leads to life.

I found something similar with Etty Hillesum, this young Jewish woman who died in German concentration camps and left us with her diary. I would like to quote this long passage dated May 30, 1942:

And I thought, "How strange! It's the war. There are concentration camps. Small cruelties are added to other cruelties. Passing through the streets, I can say of many houses that I see on my way: here a son is in prison, there the father is held hostage, here again we have to bear the death sentence of a son of 18 years old. And these streets and houses are all around my house. I know the hunted down air of people, the human suffering which does not stop accumulating, I know the persecutions, the oppression, the arbitrary, the impotent hatred and all this sadism. I know all this and I continue to look in the depths of my eyes for the smallest fragment of reality that imposes itself on me. And yet, when I stop being on my guard to abandon myself, I suddenly find myself resting against the bare chest of life, and its arms which embrace me are so soft and so protective, and the beat of his heart, I could not even describe it: so slow, so regular, so sweet, almost muffled, but so faithful, strong enough to never stop, and at the same time so good, so merciful."¹

One of Etty's great discoveries is that life is good. But to find out, you have to go deeper into yourself, where there is this mystery that we call God, that Jesus calls Father, and surrender to this faith, or to use Etty's words: "abandon myself".

What awaits David, Barbara and Charlotte? Suffering is undoubtedly here to stay. The wounds will leave scars. The couple will likely split up even more. David may be able to achieve a semblance of normalcy with the help of the appropriate medication. Barbara will have to overcome her feeling of guilt and will probably start her life over with another man. Charlotte will grow up with scars in her heart, but will no doubt be able to chart her course in life. The past is forever fixed, suffering is inevitable. The important thing is first to recognize it. It is also important for David to find people who will support him, like Barbara and Charlotte will have the support of grandparents. But the stake remains: can this suffering open up on life, and thus have a meaning? The answer is in everyone's hands.

-André Gilbert, Gatineau, March 2014

¹ Etty Hillesum: [An Interrupted Life and Letters from Westerbork](#), French translation published by Seuil (Paris), 2008, p. 541.

