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Love and Responsibility

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Love and Responsibility

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Seventh Sunday of Easter

Sunday Readings for May 20, 2012 for Cycle B:

Acts 1:15-26; Ps 103; 1 Jn 4:11-16; Jn 17:11-19

LOVE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Lawrence E. Frizzell

Long before we could retain memories of our dependence on others, the many signs of our parents' love for us constituted an essential dimension of our wellbeing. No act of gratitude can suffice to express the debt we owe to our mother, the first to show us the reflection of God's love for each human person. The experience of that love becomes the foundation for the way we grow, nurtured by any number of sacrifices on our behalf. It is, therefore, singularly appropriate to honor our mothers during the month dedicated to the Mother of Christ and our spiritual Mother.

The theme that links the first reading and the Gospel is the sin and mysterious destiny of Judas Iscariot. "The saying in Scripture uttered long ago by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David was destined to be fulfilled in Judas, the one who guided those who arrested Jesus" (Acts 1:16). In his solemn prayer at the Last Supper, Jesus declared: "As long as I was with them, I guarded them with your Name which you gave me... and not one of them was lost, none but him who was destined to be lost in fulfillment of Scripture" (Jn 17:12).

Do these passages imply that Judas was merely a pawn in a drama that transcends the human order? Here he is called "the son of perdition," and John has indicated that "the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him" (13:2, 27, see 6:70). However, these statements do not imply denial of free will. Judas, like the brothers of Joseph when they sold him into slavery, was responsible for his deed. An invitation must be extended to the devil before forces of darkness can enter the human heart. Joseph explained to his repentant brothers: "Your meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Gn 50:20). Indeed, our decisions and actions are part of a cosmic drama, components in the struggle between good and evil that, for Christians, is epitomized by the crucifixion of Jesus. In any situation of persecution and oppression, many stand guilty of the crime. It may have happened anyway, but no one can take that as an excuse for his or her collaboration or even indifference.

None of us knows the weakness that led Judas to deny Christ's oft-expressed signs of love, although John 12:6 indicated that it included greed. Nor can we fathom the personal guilt of those mothers who pass drugs, sickness and death to their unborn infants. However, someone is guilty of these crimes, probably a number of people whose greed leads them to exploit the weakness and lack of real love in their young lives. As we express gratitude to our own mothers, living and deceased, we realize how much God has loved us in giving us responsible parents! "If God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another" (1 Jn 4:11). How can we carry this gift to those tempted by people whose insatiable greed separates them from divine love?