

“Remorse vs. Repentance”

1. **Wasn't Judas' betrayal a necessary part of God's plan,** as is even seemingly indicated today in a surface reading of the 1st reading from Acts and the Gospel passage in the words of Jesus: “...*none of them was lost except the son of destruction, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled?*” Well, the reality is God is **omniscient** (all knowing), and so He knows full well what choices we may make and yet He weaves even our bad decisions into His providential plan for the world. But we are truly free, not just apparently so! **This is a foundational principle of our Catholic faith;** otherwise any talk of holiness or sin means nothing and is a waste of time and energy. God didn't make or predestine Judas to betray Jesus; Judas freely chooses to do his evil deed of betraying Jesus. It's similar to us choosing to do evil, i.e., sin, in our lives. **Does God make us commit our sins?** Not if we believe in true **free will**, as we do as Catholics. **How do we make sense of all this?** By realizing that God doesn't intend for us to do evil with our free will; our freedom is given to us to model God in His Goodness, Love and Truth - but conversely we can use it for evil if we like. Nevertheless, despite ourselves, God in His mysterious Providence - His all-encompassing care for His creation, particularly for the human race, continues to bring good out of even the worst evil man can produce. **Witness the Crucifixion of Jesus. Witness our own lives** if we have turned away from a life of mortal sin, and now are trying to live a life of virtue and goodness in God. **Witness the difference between Peter's repentance and Judas's remorse.**
2. After all, Peter and Judas both betrayed Jesus the night of the Last Supper. Peter denied Jesus three times, and Judas handed Jesus over to the people who plotted and carried out his death. **And yet now Peter is remembered as a saint and Judas simply as the traitor.** The main difference between the two is not the nature or the gravity of their sin, but rather their willingness to accept God's mercy or not. Peter wept for his sins, came back to Jesus (**which is what**

repentance means), and was pardoned by Jesus. The Gospel describes Judas as feeling bad for what he did to Jesus after the fact (**remorse**), but then in his pride and shame went and hung himself in despair – instead of turning back to Jesus like Peter did. At times we all betray Jesus in different ways, but the question is: how do we respond to our sins that we freely commit and cause problems and misery of various sorts in our lives? Do we **repent** in humility? Or just have **remorse** in our pride, but never really seek out God’s forgiveness? Do we turn back to the Lord daily and beg for his mercy, like **St. Peter**; not presuming on his mercy, but humbly asking for it especially in the Sacrament of Confession, especially if some of our sins are mortal? Or do we fall like **Judas** apparently did into despair and a type of spiritual pride, in which he refused to humble himself and ask for God’s mercy and forgiveness (thinking wrongly that his sins were beyond forgiveness), and so he did himself in, by committing suicide? **Humility is the key to the spiritual life.** To see ourselves for what we are in truth: sinners, but sinners who are called by the love of God to grow in holiness, like St. Peter. As I’ve mentioned many times before, we don’t become a saint overnight. It is a long process of steady growth in the Lord.

3. **How do we grow in communion with the Lord, in the ways of holiness, despite our weakness and sinfulness?** We need to do penance for our past sins (see Peter’s tears and the lines in his face), but not live in the **past**. We are called to live in the **present** moment, relying on God’s mercy and grace to help us take the next good step in holiness, be it small or big, and then entrusting our **future** to His Providential care, instead of worrying and fretting about it. This is how we can share in the **joy** of the Lord even now. **Abandon yourself to God’s loving providential care.** We are indeed in the world with all its challenges, but are not to be of the world and its selfish way of thinking and living. Jesus prays to the Father for us, His followers *“not to take us out of the world, but to consecrate us in the truth, to protect us from the evil one, and fill us with His joy completely.”* May we live that consecration each day by humbling ourselves, unlike satan, unlike Judas, and turn back to Jesus like St. Peter in trust and love. God bless you.