

Homily for Wednesday of Holy Week

In any given society, you can see where its priorities lie by looking at their tallest buildings. Many of our cities are now dominated by skyscrapers occupied by large corporations whose primary objective is profit maximisation. Some of these corporations are superpowers whose net worth surpasses the GDP of many countries in the developing world. In this new world order, the danger is that economics will become an end in and of itself. When beauty, truth and compassion take a back seat to the preservation of wealth and power, then we have a problem on our hands.

At the moment, our country is making many decisions to respond to the corona virus crisis. Some of those decisions are geared toward maintaining the strength of our economy. But it's important that these decisions don't triumph over the need to show compassion to the needy. Take, for instance, those who find themselves stuck in Australia as backpackers. Our government is saying that they should go home if they are unable to support themselves either by finding work, drawing upon their personal savings or superannuation. During the good times we are more than happy to have them here to do the farming and processing jobs which the locals don't want to do. Now, in the tough times, is the advice of our government in keeping with the tenets of biblical hospitality?

Judas was happy to follow Jesus in the good times. He saw the miracles of Christ: the free food, the free booze and the following he had developed. He saw the prospect of Judah becoming once again rich and powerful by throwing off the shackles of Roman oppression.

Yet when Jesus did not turn out to be a militant messiah like Julius Caesar, Judas allowed himself to be seduced by the momentary pleasures of wealth, pleasure and power. And his betrayal snowballed. He began by taking a few denarii from the common fund of the apostles. And he ended up by being complicit in deicide, the killing of God, in exchange for 30 pieces of silver.

Plan B for Judas led to depression, despair and suicide. And that is how sin works. It is ever enticing but never fulfilling. It turns us into addicts, always wanting more and more to maintain the high until it finally destroys us just as it destroyed Judas.

And it almost destroyed the great St Augustine until he received the grace to pray: You have made us for Yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.

- Thomas Azzi, O.P.