

Passion Sunday C – Luke 22:14-23; 56

We approach the passion story of Luke by concentrating on a single part of it, *the Arrest Scene*, which sets the tone for the remainder. It falls neatly into three parts. In the first, Jesus meets Judas. Judas approaches Jesus to kiss him. The actual kiss is omitted. This evangelist passes over the more revolting and harrowing details of the passion. Jesus speaks first, addressing Judas by name. Even now, he continues his ministry of calling sinners to repentance. This is the first of several personal encounters of Jesus in Luke's story, which climax in his conversation with the good thief.

In the second part, Jesus encounters his disciples, whose flight Luke does not mention. When they see Jesus in trouble, they crowd around to protect him, and they only desist in obedience to his instructions. They are those who stood by him in his trials. He refuses their assistance because the Passion is a necessity he must accept. He heals the victim of his disciples' enthusiasm. His ministry of doing good and healing continues even at this stage.

In the third part, he speaks to his enemies. The reader sees the irony of the situation. He whose birth was greeted with a song of peace by angels from heaven, and had taught his followers to love their enemies, is now threatened with swords and clubs. The only explanation is *the power of darkness*, but we know that he had overcome this in his desert conflict with Satan. So Jesus went to his death, acknowledged as innocent even by Pilate and Herod. His body was given and his blood poured out "for you", so that repentance and the forgiveness of sins could be proclaimed to all the nations.

The greatest irony of all is that Jesus' threat to his preaching and carrying out of the Kingdom of God comes from within; from his own people and his own religion and religious leaders: first by Judas, one of his disciples and then by the Temple Guard or the Jerusalem Police who came to arrest him in the name of the *Hight Priest*, the equivalent of our Pope.

The Power of Darkness will always try to work through religion and religious leaders in its ultimate goal to mock God and God's love for us, especially when God comes to us as not just as an innocent and vulnerable baby but as the Son of God nailed to a cross.