

Jesus Himself, true God and true Man, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the light of the world that cannot be overcome by darkness, chose twelve apostles. **All of them abandoned Him when he was arrested**, and one was *directly* responsible for handing him over to His murderers.

Jesus has been betrayed in every age by people who have been chosen to represent Him to the world.

The **infallibility of the Church and of the pope** is due to the infallible power of **God** to protect what He has revealed. The doctrine that **God will not permit the Church or the pope to officially teach what is false** is a doctrine about the goodness and power of **God**, not about the goodness or power of the members of the Church or of the papacy.

The Catholic Church does *not* now teach and *never has taught* that popes, bishops, priests or deacons are **sinless** (*impeccable*). There are, unfortunately, all too many proofs from the past and the present that the sacrament of **Holy Orders** does *not* make men holy automatically. **Ordained men have committed every form of sin imaginable**, including apostasy, heresy, adultery, rape, incest, pedophilia, pederasty, sodomy, murder, theft, lying, blasphemy, and the construction of Churchill Tower.

The sins of ordained men have not obscured the teachings of Jesus. Anyone who can condemn the sins of priests affirms that they know the difference between right and wrong and the difference between fidelity to Jesus and infidelity. **Those who condemn the sins of the ordained prove that they have received the gospel message through the unbroken Tradition of the Church.**

The sins of the ordained discredit the sinners, not the Church. *Not one teaching of the Church is changed by the sad fact that Jesus has been betrayed by His disciples.* The sins of priests prove that priests can and do sin.

Tradition is fault-tolerant. I don't mean that we should tolerate sin in our own lives or in the lives of the ordained. But neither Judas nor the multitudes who have committed the sin of Judas have destroyed the power of the remainder to **transmit the knowledge of salvation fully and faithfully.** If Tradition were like a chain, breaking one single link would break the whole chain. But it is much more like a rope, in which thousands of strands are woven together; though a few strands may snap, the rest are able to take up the remainder of the load. The message of Jesus' saving death and resurrection is carried now by millions of messengers; great harm can be done *locally* by the sins of messengers who betray the message, but **the truth of the gospel** is still carried to the ends of the earth.

If we know for sure that popes, bishops, priests and deacons have sinned, then we affirm that we know what God has revealed through the Church.

The sins of the ordained should come as **no surprise** to people who know the text of the Mass. In addition to praying with the whole congregation for the forgiveness of sins, there are prayers said quietly by the priest alone, reminding him of his need for repentance and forgiveness:

Before the Gospel: "Lord, cleanse my heart and my lips that I may worthily proclaim Your holy gospel."

After the Gospel: "By the words of this holy gospel may *my sins* be blotted out."

After the Offertory (while washing his hands): "Lord, wash away *my sins* and cleanse me of *my iniquities.*"

After the Lamb of God: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, by the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit your death brought life to the world. By your holy body and blood *free me from all my sins* and from every evil. Keep me faithful to your teaching and never let me be parted from you." Alternatively: "Lord Jesus Christ, with faith in your love and mercy I eat your body and drink your blood. Let it not bring me condemnation but health in mind and body."

At Communion: "May the Body of Christ bring *me* to everlasting life. ... May the Blood of Christ bring *me* to everlasting life."

After Communion: "Lord, may I receive these gifts in purity of heart. May they bring me healing and strength, now and forever" (while purifying the chalice and paten).

Heresy: keeping *part* of the tradition and rejecting the rest.

Apostasy: abandoning the faith entirely.

Many people in our culture have a strange affection for Judas. They portray his act of betrayal as noble and worthy of praise as if his treachery toward Jesus is the cause of our salvation instead of Jesus' willingness to lay down his life to save us. Judas clearly miscalculated what he was doing--otherwise he would not have committed suicide but would have stayed on earth, happy and proud of what he had accomplished. That Jesus allowed Judas to make bad choices is not an indication that Judas did what Jesus wanted him to do. God's knowledge of the choices we make does not diminish our freedom in making those choices. So, too, with Judas. God, in His mercy, can bring good out of evil; that does not mean that evil is good or that good is evil.