

**April 9, 2017 The Informer Homily:** In 1935 the legendary Irish-American filmmaker, John Ford, directed one of his finest films, the Academy award winning *"The Informer"*. It was a critically acclaimed success. It is the story set in the early 1920's of a simple minded Irish patriot, Gypo Nolan, who is kicked out of the Irish Republican Army for failing to carry out an order of execution. His superiors demanded that he avenge the killing of one of their soldiers. Left destitute and confused, he sees a wanted poster for one of his closest friends and comrade in arms, Frankie McPhillip that promises a reward for information leading to Frankie's arrest. A desperate man, he seeks out the British Army. He betrays his friend to the British for the modest reward. In a later scene, Frankie is killed in the presence of Gypo's mother and sister. In dramatic fashion, the film underscores the dark side of the Irish War of Independence.

In all four gospels, we meet an informer, Judas Iscariot. In the beginning of Matthew's gospel, Judas asks a question which will be repeated in every age of the Christian Church, "What will you give me? And then I will hand him over to you." Judas is willing to deliver Jesus to his enemies for a handful of coins. "And for their part, they weighed out thirty pieces of silver". (Mt.26:15) Jesus' life is valued as that of a slave. Such was his market value!

It is genuinely surprising to realize that a member of Jesus' close circle of friends went so far as to sell out the man whom he believed to be the Messiah and the man who had called him to be one of the apostles. It is unlikely that there are scenes as painful as the one in which Judas betrayed his master with a kiss. He sinned in betraying innocent blood. In his attempt to return the blood money, Judas was rebuffed by the very ones who bribed him in the first place. In the Book of Deuteronomy, we read, "Cursed is he who accepts payment for slaying innocent blood". Money gained through dishonest practices is not to be brought into the Temple treasury.

In his best selling book on the events of Holy Week, the erstwhile Pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI, writes, "Jesus took upon himself the betrayal of all ages, the pain caused by betrayal in every era, and he endured the anguish of history to the bitter end".

"What will you give me?" is a question that Christians must ponder in every age. Are we willing to turn our backs on Jesus to gain some advantage in life? Are we ready to compromise our faith and betray the Church for money, status, publicity fame or a high paying job? (e.g: Some years ago, An African missionary sadly told of African Christians who surrendered their faith for money handed out by oil rich Moslems.)

As we begin Holy Week, let us be mindful of each of the disciples' reply to the startling words of Jesus, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me...". "...Surely, it is not I, Lord?" (Mt. 26: 21-22) came the reply. In the presence of the One unjustly betrayed and condemned to death, can any one of us claim to be without fault?

Amen!