



It's clear that the early Christian community was shaken to the core by what Judas did. It's one thing to deal with opposition from without - the religious and political authorities of the day. It's another thing to see that the hour of darkness is precipitated by one of their own, a man in whom the Master had confided the mysteries of the kingdom. Nothing is quite so damaging to the trust upon which all human communities must rely.

Thus the drama enacted around the table. "One of you is about to betray me." Jesus says. One after the other, each of the twelve responds, "Surely it is not I, Lord." Everything depends on the tone of that response. How do they speak these words? Are they men full of indignation that such a thing could happen in their ranks and exonerating themselves in the process? "SURELY, it is not I, Lord!" Far be it from me to do such a thing! Or do they speak the words more haltingly, perhaps with trembling in their voices, "Surely, it is not I, Lord??" Instead of keeping the possibility of betraying Jesus at arm's length (how scandalous!), they speak as men chastened by their own weakness and not presuming on their strength.

One of these responses is a dead end, the other a road to redemption. Each will determine in a

decidedly different way the disposition we bring to the events of our salvation. They might also offer some guidance in our response to Church scandals. These “inside jobs” provide ample fodder for indignation, and distancing oneself from such hypocrisy is an understandable reaction. But, all presumption aside, the “cutting bait” response may rob us of a chance to encounter more deeply the truth about ourselves. Each of us is dependent upon the mercy of God for whatever integrity there is in our life. As St. Augustine prays in his *Confessions*, “All of our hope is nowhere except in your great mercy, O Lord.”

It all comes together in Peter’s remorse and Judas’ despair. Coming face to face with his own weakness, Peter became a more credible witness to God’s love. Judas’ betrayal brought him to the void.