

Peter's Denial (Luke 22:54-62). The three denials are highlighted by being shown without distraction by other incidents. In each case Peter shows by his presence that he means to be loyal to the Lord, though he shows by his words that he is incapable of sustaining that loyalty. He addresses his third questioner as "my friend" even as he denies his friendship with his Master. But Jesus' prayer for him has not been ineffective; one glance from him and a broken-hearted Peter leaves the courtyard. Because his sorrow takes the form of contrition rather than remorse, his trusting love will bring him back, humbled and contrite, to the Lord he loves, a more fitting leader than the rather arrogant Peter who claimed that he would be faith-ful though all the others might fail. Have we learned this trusting love after sin? Have we learned not to believe that we won't fail?

B. Jesus Under Guard (Luke 22:63-65). The remaining verses of the section treated today again focus our attention on Jesus. We are told that in Nazi concentration camps the first task of the guards was to de-humanize the prisoners. They were to be dirtied, mocked, stripped as far as possible of every trace of identity with those who tormented them, lest their shared humanity arouse some trace of sympathy on the part of the tormentors. It is in that perspective, perhaps, that we are to see the treatment of Jesus during the night after his arrest.

Brutalized by their profession, the soldiers "amused themselves at his expense." Before, He had inspired a certain awe. Now they feel that His power has deserted Him, and they celebrate their victory with sadistic pleasure. When daybreak comes He will be reduced to a state that put the chief priests and scribes at their ease in condemn-ing Him. Read Matthew 27:57-66 about that night.

The section dealing with the Jerusalem ministry begins with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and ends with the prophecy of His final coming to judge the world. The passion narrative indicates how the final victory is to be achieved. The enthusiasm of the crowds at His entry into the city will melt into antagonism of crowds as He is cast out of the city to die. What is happening here reflects a summary of Israel's history, as echoed in the Nazareth ministry and the ministry in Galilee; the Jerusalem ministry recapitulates a movement that the early Church is experiencing in its own ministry, incorporating the mystery of suffering and rejection into the larger mystery of resurrection.

The parables of the unjust steward, the wicked vine dressers, the great banquet all lead to this. In all of them there was a rejection of the master, the owner, the king. Here only the Good Thief can dare to ask to be remembered when Jesus will come in His "kingly power."

Throughout His ministry people had tried to dictate His role: give us a sign; give us always this bread. They wanted to take Him by force and make Him king. In the courtyard of the High Priest they taunt Him with His kingship and deny His authority. Jesus, called the Chosen One at His Baptism, pays the cost of His mission as the Suffering Servant. As we see the power of Jesus' love, even for His enemies, let us examine our following of Jesus. Do we return love to our enemies? Do we take refuge in God and in prayer as we face rejection and injustice? Are we able to "take and eat" (Matthew 26:26) or do we live in a way that prevents us from Holy Communion?