

**GOSPEL PEARLS**

## Judas's despair

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*Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over. On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The teacher says, "My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.'" The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and*

*prepared the Passover. When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me." Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, "Surely it is not I, Lord?" He said in reply, "He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born." Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" He answered, "You have said so." (Matthew 26: 14-25)*

When Jesus replied "you have said so" to Judas (while knowing what he thought and felt) he taught him and us something: when we behave like Judas, it is we who condemn ourselves. Such self-condemnation occurs by way of the wrong choices we make consciously against God's Will. Hell exists, therefore, not because of a defect in our Creator's mercy but because to the refusal of His creatures to do His Will. Whenever we sin, may we seek our Lord's forgiveness immediately and sincerely so as not to fall into despair like Judas.