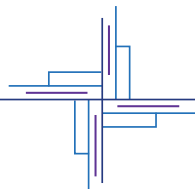


## MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK, MARCH 25

*You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.*

*John 12:8*



We begin Holy Week with one of Christianity's most provocative texts on wealth and poverty, when Jesus says, "you always have the poor with you." In the United States, this statement has become a rationale to dismiss Jesus' numerous teachings about compassion and care for the most vulnerable. Many point to those words from Jesus as a way to justify indifference to poverty.

But if we look more closely at the story, we see an entirely different message than indifference. In the passage, Judas voices a desire to gather money for the poor, but in reality, Scripture tells us he intends to divert these funds for his own gain. The Gospel of John reveals Judas has a

special role as keeper of the common purse and is embezzling from it. Jesus' uncharacteristic statement thwarts Judas from taking another opportunity to steal.

Tragically, Judas's corruption is not an isolated incident in the story of Christianity. The church is made up of imperfect people, and corruption and embezzlement happen. This underscores the need for strong safeguards and transparent standards to ensure that gifts directed to the most vulnerable are used as intended.

### **Today's readings**

Psalm 36:5–11 | Isaiah 42:1–9

Hebrews 9:11–15 | John 12:1–11

*It may seem unusual to broach the topic of financial transparency and safety measures at the beginning of Holy Week. But stewardship and care for the poor are intrinsically bound. It would be a disservice if I did not acknowledge that Episcopal Relief & Development has established such safeguards. As a regular donor to Episcopal Relief & Development, I contribute with complete confidence that my donations to "the least of these" are used as intended.*