

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Caiaphas**      Fifth Week of Lent      Saturday, April 13, 2019      Ez 37:21-28; **Jn 11:45-56**      (St. Martin I, pope and martyr)      (God can work through self-will, but we cannot hold onto our self-will and also follow the will of God.)

**“He did not say this on his own, but since he was high priest for that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God.”**

We have to read the gospels with a deep sense of empathy. Indeed knowledge of God brings empathy and sympathy, which connects us with all of reality, all of God’s creation and God himself. **As Jesus himself demonstrates, God lives and acts in empathy with the creation** and desires always the best for the creation, for all parts of the creation. **The goal**, as St. Paul says, is that eventually **“God will become all in all.”** However this eventuality is **a long time coming because of free will**, free will combined with tremendous foolishness and ignorance of what is really good, what is properly the goal and the prize of life, and **thus the common desires for counterfeit goods**, counterfeit blessings, counterfeit pleasures.

Now **this gospel focuses on Caiaphas in this very empathetic way.** Caiaphas was high priest and what he said was a prophecy; he was speaking for God. This is, again, **the intertwining of human will**, which is self-interested, which is all about me or all about us protecting, securing, increasing, holding **versus the will of God**, which is about love and giving and embracing the whole. So in this world all kinds of people are at work. The Romans were at work with their idea of empire and their idea of power and control and crushing the spirit of their conquered people—for what? For profit, for wealth, for influence. Caiaphas and the other members of the Sanhedrin were protecting the nation, the people of God, Israel. And of course, in a sense, they were right in wanting this. **Caiaphas was not wrong to say that “if people believed in Jesus, then the Romans will come and take away both our land in our nation,”** because in fact that actually

happened later, not because of Jesus, but because of other revolutionaries. **The Romans didn't like any competition. So this is not foolishness he is speaking.**

**And God uses the self-interest, the self-will, if you want, of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin to further his own divine providence.** Of course God can do this because God was willing to sacrifice himself. **God, embodied in Christ, was willing to give up his life,** because he had nothing else to lose. The whole life of Christ was a life of pouring out himself, pouring out his love, pouring out his life, so eventually pouring out his blood. This is God's way. **And it changed the history of the world in terms of its potential, because if anyone now follows Christ, they will also arrive at the resurrection of the just, and they will see the glory of God.** And for those who want to look, all darkness is wiped away. But it takes surrender to the providence of God. It takes letting go of self-will. **God can work through self-will, but we cannot hold onto our self-will and also follow the will of God.** If we want to live a blessed life, Jesus is the way and the truth.