



Introduction: A trial that still confronts us

Amid the angry cries of a furious crowd, the fate of two men is decided. One is innocent, the other guilty. One is the Son of God, the other a convicted criminal. Pilate, the Roman governor, proposes what seems to be a simple choice: **“Whom do you want me to release to you? Jesus or Barabbas?”** (cf. Mt 27:17). What happened that day was not just a historical event: it was a reflection of the drama that repeats itself in every human heart, in every moral decision, in every moment of our lives. This brief yet intense scene hides a theological depth that can transform our lives—if we learn to see it with eyes of faith.

Today, over two thousand years later, **we still choose between Jesus and Barabbas**, often without realizing it. This article will help you rediscover the power of this moment, its eternal teaching, and how to apply it in your daily life with a practical and spiritual guide.

1. Historical context: A rigged trial

To fully understand the contrast between Jesus and Barabbas, it's important to know who Barabbas was.

Barabbas appears in all four Gospels as a notorious prisoner, **accused of insurrection and murder during a rebellion** (Mk 15:7; Lk 23:19; Jn 18:40). In other words, he was a violent revolutionary, guilty of crimes that threatened Roman rule. In the eyes of the world, he was a dangerous man, but to some Jews of the time, he may have seemed like a political “liberator.”

Pilate, wanting to avoid condemning Jesus—whom he himself declared innocent (cf. Mt 27:24)—offers to release one prisoner as a Passover custom. However, **the chief priests stir up the people to ask for Barabbas** (Mt 27:20). The result is shocking: **“Release Barabbas!”** they shout. And when Pilate asks what he should do with Jesus, the crowd, now blind with rage, responds: **“Crucify him!”** (Mt 27:22).

2. Jesus and Barabbas: Two paths, two messiahs

The choice between Jesus and Barabbas is not merely between two individuals; it is a choice between **two worldviews, two types of salvation, two completely opposite paths**:



- **Barabbas represents human, political, immediate, and violent salvation.** He is the symbol of all the false messiahs who promise freedom without conversion, power without love, justice without mercy. He embodies the temptation to solve spiritual problems through human means, to impose rather than transform.
- **Jesus represents true salvation, which comes through the Cross.** He is the Messiah who does not flee from suffering, who does not respond to evil with evil but with redeeming love. He came not to overthrow the Romans but to conquer sin; not to seek revenge but to offer forgiveness. His path is more difficult, more demanding, but it is the only one that leads to eternal life.

This contrast is not a story of the past: **each day, we face the same choice.** Do we want a savior who takes away discomfort or one who transforms our hearts? Do we choose Barabbas or Jesus?

3. Theological significance: The mystery of substitution

Here we encounter a profound mystery: **the righteous One dies in place of the guilty.**

The choice to free Barabbas is unjust, yet providential. Because **Jesus does not die only in place of Barabbas, but in place of all humanity**, which, like him, deserves condemnation. Barabbas represents every sinner—you and me. And Jesus, in a supreme act of love, **takes our place on the Cross.**

As St. Paul says:

“Christ died for the ungodly at the appointed time [...] while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom 5:6-8)

This mystery is the heart of our faith: **redemption through substitution.** We, the guilty ones, are set free. He, the innocent one, is crucified. What’s even more astonishing is that **Jesus accepts this fate freely.** He does not defend Himself or escape. He gives Himself up willingly to save us.



4. Practical applications: Whom do you choose each day?

This Gospel passage is a spiritual roadmap for the daily battle of the Christian. Here is a **practical and pastoral guide** to apply this moment to your life:

A. Recognize your inner “Barabbas”

We all carry within us a rebellious, selfish, sometimes violent part that seeks to dominate, to take revenge, to prove we’re right. Before we judge the crowd that shouted “Crucify Him!”, we should examine ourselves. How often do we choose the easy way, comfort, sin, pride?

Spiritual tip: Make a nightly examination of conscience and identify the moments you chose Barabbas over Jesus. Write them down if needed. Conversion begins with truth.

B. Pray not to be manipulated

The crowd was manipulated by the religious leaders. Today, we are often influenced by media, ideologies, or societal pressure to think, speak, or believe certain things. Outer noise drowns out the voice of conscience.

Spiritual tip: Dedicate at least 10 minutes each day to silence. Pray with the Gospel. Let Christ speak to you—not the world.

C. Forgive like Jesus, don’t fight like Barabbas

When we are hurt, betrayed, or wronged, we have two options: react with hate or with love. With the sword or with the Cross.

Pastoral tip: The next time you suffer injustice, pause. Pray the Our Father. Remember Jesus forgave even from the Cross. Decide to act from love, not from anger.

D. Receive the Eucharist with gratitude

Jesus died in your place. How can you not thank Him? Every Mass is a renewal of the same sacrifice that began with His condemnation instead of Barabbas.

Liturgical tip: Attend Mass with devotion. When the priest says, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,” think: **“He took my place. I am Barabbas. But He**



set me free.”

E. Form your conscience

Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, but **he washed his hands**. How many times do we choose not to act, speak out, or commit ourselves out of fear or comfort?

Moral tip: Don't wash your hands. Read the Catechism. Learn Church teaching. Be a light in a confused world.

5. Barabbas: Forgotten or transformed?

And what about Barabbas? What happened to him? The Gospels do not say. Perhaps he returned to a life of crime. Or maybe, touched by what he witnessed, he changed his life. In a way, we are all Barabbas, and we have the opportunity to write a new chapter. An indirect encounter with Christ can transform us—if we allow it.

Conclusion: It's not an old story—it's your story

Each day, the world offers us many “Barabbases”: easy pleasures, comforting ideologies, success without sacrifice. But Jesus still stands silently, crowned with thorns, looking at us with love, waiting for us to choose Him.

Don't wash your hands like Pilate. Don't follow the crowd. Don't choose the easy way like Barabbas.

Choose Jesus. Choose the Cross. Choose life.

Final quote to meditate on:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (Jn 14:6)



If this article moved your heart, don't let it remain just words. Take a concrete step of conversion today. And remember: **Jesus took your place, so that you could take His.**

Who will you set free today—Barabbas or Christ?