Thirty-Two

by Steven J. Kolbe

"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."
—Matthew 26:14-16

This morning Katie and Jimmy are learning about the potters field—the one where Judas Iscariot was buried—from their grandma. Katie is my niece and Jimmy is my nephew, and even though Katie is almost two years older than her brother, they are roughly the same size.

All morning their mom peddles adventures and mysteries and absurdist chronicles about greedy pigs and dry pancakes to the local children at her school, and then she comes home to her big family of little people. And in the meantime their grandma, Joan, prays and sings and reads scripture with them, counting out thirty pieces of silver with Katie and playing Who Loves Who More with Jimmy.

"Tell her how *much* more," Katie finally suggests to end the infinite loop of "No, I love *you* more."

Jimmy thinks for a moment and then shouts with all the ardor and volume of a two-year-old, "32! I love you 32!"

When I stop to think about how much I've been forgiven for—not just the times I almost died and didn't, but the catalog of sins venial and mortal, the promises I made to God and my fellows and then broke immediately, the myriad separations from Him in my words and in my thoughts—I can't help but feel impossibly blessed and grateful, grateful for what I've received and what I've managed not to lose. But what leads the procession, where I start every time, is this love like Jimmy's that overpays any debt I could acquire.

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