

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION "A"  
APRIL 8/9, 2017

***"Surrender to God, and He will do everything for you"*** is the antiphon bracketing Psalm 37 in the Liturgy of the Hours, the daily prayer of the Church. Every time I pray them something within me wants to rebel.

***Surrender*** is about accepting defeat, capitulation, yielding, giving in, relinquishing possession, give up, letting go, resigning. However, St. Paul in today's second reading proclaims that "***Jesus***, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he ***emptied himself.***" Jesus surrendered. But not in the way we think or may have experienced.

This week as the Church we journey with ***Jesus*** through his ***passion***. The Latin word "passio" is the root both of "passive" (as in our understanding of surrender) as well as "patient", bearing hardship and/or suffering while holding steadfast to faith. It is in this dual sense that Jesus "surrendered" "emptied" himself. Holding fast to his faith in the Father, Jesus willingly submits to the consequences of his words and deeds in carrying out the Father's mission even to the point of suffering, death and seeming abandonment by God. Jesus is emptied. Next Sunday, we will celebrate the result of his surrender, his Resurrection, God's vindication of Jesus, raising his body to an eternal life that will have no end. Surrender become victory. This is also our hope who have put faith in him.

But first, we, too must "surrender"-- our wills, our lives to God in imitation of Jesus. This is a great challenge. By nature we resist. Our Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and works of charity over the past five weeks have hopefully begun, or deepened, our walk on this path.

A month ago I joined members of my family in moving my mother out of the apartment in a facility where she has lived for the last two-and-a-half years. Having already had to surrender the house she and my late father built in the 1950s along with many of its furnishings when she initially moved, now she was having to surrender most of those few things she had brought with her, leaving her only some clothes and a few personal items that could fit into a small closet and a night stand beside her bed. As I journeyed with Mom through this experience of surrender, of emptying, I was moved by the witness of her acceptance and calmness of faith knowing full well the next surrender, the next emptying will come through death when she will leave life in this world and hand herself over in faith to God. Her witness to me was a testimony of the deep prayer life and faithfulness to the sacraments I have witnessed in her throughout her life as well as a model for the inevitable moments of surrender now and in the future in my life.

This week is an invitation to embrace the many “surrenders” and “emptyings” that are, or will be, part of our life praying to unite them to the surrender and emptying of Jesus we proclaim and receive every time we gather to celebrate the Eucharist he has commanded us to do in his memory.

***Surrender to God, and He will do everything for you.***

Fr Jim Secora