

Surrender

April 29, 2021

A Greeting

First, I must say that anything and **everything** that we do in the service of the Lord, ideally is done **out of LOVE**. Without love nothing has value as St. Paul clearly points out in 1Cor 13. In John 14:12 we see that those who obey the Lord's commandments show they love Him.

Secondly, what is essential to the human condition before God is **HUMILITY**. We are called to be just, love mercy and walk humbly before our God (Micah 6:8).

Thirdly, one must believe, have **FAITH** in God and believe that He is asking us to serve Him in a particular way.

Finally, as we read in Sirach 2 verse 1, "... if you aspire to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for **TRIAL**."

So, with these thoughts in mind let us launch into our topic. Surrender is the basic position for a Christian.

Surrender in its ultimate expression is to cast ourselves into the ocean of God's love without fear or thought of ourselves but in complete trust that He will look after everything. When Mary said, let it be done! She cast herself completely into the hands of the Lord without hesitation and without thought of herself trusting completely that God will take care of everything.

We are called to surrender to God in in two ways. First, we have a general invitation to do what God is calling us to; our faith, our vocation in life and so the like. Secondly, along the way of life we encounter various individual things that God is asking us to surrender. This also may be to avoid or give up things. Doing or giving up these individual things will contribute to strengthen our general call to surrender.

Some things are clear to us and easy to surrender. Some things are clear to us and hard to surrender. Some things are unclear to us and we avoid them or are in denial of them and we are still not ready to surrender them.

We are called to be open to what God is doing in us, what he wants from us, but we may have to seek God to discover just what He wants us to surrender at any given time. When these things hidden from our consciousness are uncovered and we become aware of them, that is a sign that we are ready and it's time for us to surrender them difficult or easy.

We can see from this that surrender is not an all-or-nothing prospect. Rather it is a process of God calling us deeper and preparing us to surrender. When we are ready, He presents to us what it is He wants us to do.

We should also be aware that Divine Providence arranges daily opportunities for us to surrender, such as our trials, the events in our lives, issues in our relationships with others and the like.

So, on this topic of surrender, I will use the experience of Abraham our father in faith to illustrate surrender and the benefits of surrender.

We will see how an act on Abraham's part not only prefigures what God will do by sending His only Son as a sacrifice, but we will also see that Abraham is responsible for God's subsequent action in saving us, by you all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Let us let the scriptures open this up for us.

The process of God calling Abraham is a long one. It begins in Ur of the Chaldeans where his father decides to take the family to the land of Canaan. Abraham was about 70 years old. God later tells Abraham that it was He who called him from Ur, evidentially through his father. However, they stayed in Haran near the top of the fertile crescent in present day Turkey. His father Terah died, and God spoke to Abraham who was then called Abram.

God spoke to Abram and said to go from his father's house and go to a land God will show him and that God will make him a great nation and bless him and that through him all the families of earth will be blessed. Abram obeys God and takes his family and possessions and moves into Canaan past Shechem to the Oak of Moreh. God appeared to Abram there and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." Abram built an altar to God and there he called upon the name of the Lord.

In Chapter 15 of Genesis God came to Abram in a vision. God promises him a son and through him 'number the stars... so shall your descendants be (verse 5)'. And he believed (verse 6).

In chapter 17 God makes a covenant with Abram changing his name to Abraham, 'for I make you the father of many nations...

In Genesis 18 God promises a son to Abraham and Sarah... Isaac was born about 1900 years before the birth of Jesus. In this passage we can see Abraham's gift of Discernment, Humility, Zeal, Desire to Serve, Favour, Faith, and the hint of the Blessed Trinity, there are three strangers, yet Abraham addresses the three in the singular – "my Lord".

Comparing the New Testament passages, Abraham asks the Lord if he has found favour; the Angel tells Mary, "You have found favour with God." Sarah laughs when she hears that she will bear a son, the Lord said, "Is anything too marvelous for God to do (NAB)." The Angel in Luke 1:24 says, "Nothing will be impossible with God (JB)." Sarah an old woman, 90 years old, conceived and bore a son. Mary a virgin conceived and bore a son.

Abraham surrenders: You will find several times in Genesis where Abraham surrendered, in leaving his home, to allowing his nephew Lot to choose where he would live and at other times.

In Genesis 22 we read, after these things, God tested Abraham. Abraham represents the whole human race. Testing is a primary aspect of surrender. We can see from the example of Abraham that when we surrender to God, God gives back infinitely more than we could ask or desire (Eph 3:20).

In Chapter 22 of Genesis there are several texts with interesting parallels in the New Testament.

Take your son, your only begotten son Isaac, whom you love and go to the land of Moriah (Zion) offer him as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains I will point out to you (believed to be Calvary). Abraham is asked to surrender his son as God the Father plans to offer His only begotten Son.

Isaac carries the wood for the sacrifice on his back as Jesus carries the wood of the cross on his back. Isaac is laid on the wood just as Jesus lays on the wood of the cross by the will of the Father.

As a result of Abrahams willingness to sacrifice his only son, whom he loved, God make a promise, "By myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this, and not withheld your son, your only begotten son, I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves (*or be blessed*) because you have obeyed my voice."

We see in the example of Abraham a prefiguring of God the Father surrendering His only begotten Son. We can see this in Jesus, as well, who surrendered to the Father's will to accept his passion and death.

A few weeks ago, when we considered Jesus washing our feet, I for one, cringed at the idea. That is because it is personal. But God surrendering His only begotten Son to suffer and die for us should; this should strike us far deeper in feeling cringed.

Please read over these chapters about Abraham to find how clear God's plan to save the human race is laid out 1900 BC (End of chapter 11 to chapter 23).

But what does surrender to God mean in your life, in my life and what might be the fruit?

Items to be surrendered: Sinful behavioural patterns are necessary to surrender but are required as a believer. Other items will help us in our general surrender to God in his overall plan for our lives.

First, surrender is a test, that is, it will be a challenge to us in some way. Do we surrender to God's will as Abraham did or do we dismiss the idea?

Secondly, we must believe that God is really asking us to surrender what it is He wants us to surrender.

Thirdly, carry out what God wants either to do or to stop doing.

How do you know what God is calling you to surrender?

You may know there is something that God wants you to surrender. Or through prayer you may discover something God wants you to surrender. But you may need the help of friends in prayer and the prophetic word to discover what the Lord want you to surrender.

Sharing/Testimony

In February at one of our Zoom meetings I was given a word through Prophetic Intercession that am to let go of something. I immediately believed that the Lord wanted me to give up candy and sweets. I announced that I now plan to give this up for Lent.

About one month later, in March again in our Zoom meeting I was given a word, "What you gave up is not what I want you to give up." I must say I was perplexed as to what it was that I should give up. So, my wife Bev and I agreed to pray about this. We plan to do our usual evening prayers and afterwards Bev would pray with me to discern what specific thing the Lord wanted me to let go of. As it turned out, we did not even have to pray after, because during our prayer it became eminently clear to me exactly what God wanted me to let go of. It was Internet news and especially Worldometer covid numbers. I must admit, I spent a lot of time on the Worldometer site, CNN, FOX, CBC, BBC and others checking several times a day about the pandemic and other political events.

So, when this became clear to me, I stopped immediately. And I have not returned to these behaviours. I only look at a catholic spiritual website that carries some news (to read - 10-15 minutes) and Bev and I watch a brief newscast in the evening. The first benefit of this surrender for me was a feeling of new freedom. Letting go of the worry of world affairs and the glum statistics of Covid set me free. It also gave me more time to do other things. Ironically, I was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes at the end of March. The Lord knew I would be giving up candy and sweets permanently. Hallelujah!

This was a clear call to let go and an easy one because it is black and white, do or do not do. I realize that other calls we may experience are more difficult to surrender such as that arising from a personality that rubs us the wrong way.

We can be called to surrender to fast, to more prayer, to works of charity and the like. In fact, serving some people can be an ongoing work of surrender. But sometimes it is a joy to surrender to service. Even when difficult God can give us joy.

Invariably, whether surrender is difficulty or easy, when we surrender to God's will for us, we will experience a sense of liberation and joy.

Sometimes surrender can be difficult in another way. For instance, some have a great difficulty in surrendering to Spiritual gifts – such as the gift of tongues. Again, we must recognize that there is some test in this for us, we must believe, and in this case, we must find a way to yield to God's movement within us.

Giving up something or doing something concrete can be relatively easy. It is a known quantity. The more difficult things to give up are personal habits, behaviours, and attitudes, such as, need for approval, need to be right, need to please others, need to be in control. These complex or abstract items take longer to completely surrender to. Therefore, with these we need to be persistent and faithful.

I think the best way to learn to surrender to God is to make an act of general surrender to God. The Surrender Novena is an example of such a general surrender. I find myself often praying the line from the novena, "O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything". In difficult moments it is amazing to me how this simple prayer allows me to let go and trust that, indeed, God is taking care of everything.

I would like to conclude with two other examples of surrender. Since this is the year dedicated to St. Joseph, we can honour him by considering or meditating on his surrender to God. His challenge or test was to take Mary as his wife after having decided to divorce her. She was about 3 or 4 months pregnant. If he married her people would easily think he did not have the restraint to wait until they were married or worse that someone else was the father. Yet, he surrendered to God's will regardless of what may appear to others. (Year of St. Joseph)

When we surrender expect backlash from those around us. People will talk. People will find fault. Even in our own families and among our friends we may come under criticism. All this is because the devil hates it when we surrender to God, something he refused to do, and he works on us to give up and on those around us to council us to give up. Do not give up. Persevere in your surrender to the end. All those who persevere to the end will be saved. We find the words of surrender in the Our Father, "Thy will be done".

I will pour My Spirit upon your descendants, and My blessings on your offspring (Is. 44:3)

Questions

- 1 The three disposition for surrender are Love, Humility and Faith.
Where do you see your strength? Is there something you need to work on?
- 2 How can you know what God wants you to surrender?
- 3 Is my faith sufficient to accomplish surrender in my life? If not, what can I do to increase my faith?
- 4 What have others discerned in terms of something God might want me to surrender? Am I willing to accept this?
- 5 Is there one thing that I can discern that God wants me to surrender right now. Do it.

Attach: Surrender Novena (A wonderful simple novena to help us realize how powerful and important it is to surrender.)

Litany of Humility (Good in itself, this can also give us suggestions as to what God might want us to surrender)