**“Obedience & Triumph”**

All our readings point us to the words that, “obedience leads to triumph.” Obedience is an act of meekness which is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is through obedience to God’s commandments that, we reveal the love of God to those we encounter as we journey through life even in the face of persecution. It is by doing the Father’s will that we are made holy by obedience and united to the sacrifice of His body; we expect His great love even in the time of sorrow, and we sing a new song to God who in His love, took up our flesh to suffer and die for us. It is through obedience even unto death that Christ triumphed and His name has been exalted above every other name.

One would wonder why the Father would send His only begotten Son to suffer for us. The Father’s purpose in revealing the Son was to make Himself known to us, so He could welcome those who believe in Him into eternal life with Him. His desire is to establish us in justice thereby, preserving us form eternal death. Without the Son, no one can know God. Ultimately, to believe in Him means to do His will. As we enter into Holy Week, which leads us to Easter and the joy of resurrection, our focus as we live our lives should be on our obedience to God’s will. Then, we will be part of those who will enter into the joy of His Father.

In our first reading from the Book of Prophet Isaiah, we heard how Isaiah said God had bestowed on him many graces especially the grace of obedience and he did not rebel in accepting His gifts. Instead, he used the gifts to spread the Gospel of God to those who despair so their spirit could be lifted up and they could have hope. We must live by the obedience of faith that manifest itself in love and self -giving to others who need them most. In self-sacrifice, the prophet endured he did not rebel when beaten, his beard plucked from his face and spat upon. His consolation was in the one who sent him to preach to the poor and that in the end, his obedience would lead to triumph.

It is through obedience that we are raised beyond the limits of our littleness and put in harmony with God’s will which will lead us to triumph over the trappings of the evil one who is relentless in trying to see us fall into similar error of our first parents. He would like us to disobey God’s commandments of love. If we surrender our will to God, His will, will guide us to act justly. When we hold fast to His will, no creature such as the devil will be able to impede us, because we will be filled with unsurpassable strength. Obedience is the one and the only way of wisdom and prudence for us to offer glory to God and end up triumphant as children of God.

In our Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians, we come across the same theme that obedience leads to triumph. We heard that through obedience, Christ became humble; and in humility, He who is of the same substance as the Father, His human story began with His descent into our world. As St. Paul puts it, He **“emptied Himself taking the form of a slave coming in human form in appearance.”** A supreme virtue was at work in Jesus. That virtue was loving and obedience to His heavenly Father. The virtue led Him surrender His life on the cross. Appearing, at first to be defeated. However, because of His loving obedience, at His resurrection, His heavenly Father highly exalted Him.

God the Father has the same plan for us. His plan is an invitation to join Him at His heavenly banquet. It is up to us to accept His invitation by following His commandments of love. However, we need faith to do so. This faith will lead us to see that by imitating the life of Jesus Christ, we will find the plan for our lives. Death will not be the tragic end but through obedience to God’s will, it will lead to resurrection and triumph over death, With God’s help, we just have to respond to His invitation with loving obedience like that of Jesus.

Today is the first day of Holy Week. We are celebrating Passion Sunday, otherwise called Palm Sunday when Christ rode triumphantly into Jerusalem and later, laid down His life for us. Jesus was welcomed into the City by the people as their King. In our Gospel reading, we heard about the Betrayal of Jesus by Judas. Judas sold his master for 30 silver coins. We heard about the trials and tribulations that our Lord went through because of His loving obedience to His Father so, we can be saved. In His suffering and death, Out of His obedience to the will of His Father, He became our mediator and our justice by taking on all our injustice and sin.

In our processional Gospel and our Mass Gospel, the same crowd who welcomed Him into the City, who called Him the Messiah, the Son of David, now jeered at Him, and shouted **“Let Him be crucified.”** In His human nature, when soldiers mocked and spat on Him, Jesus was just as humiliated as we feel humiliated when we are been insulted or ridiculed. His pain during His crucifixion, was true torture and His agony on the cross was true torment. He went through all these, fully human and fully divine. Jesus’ paschal mystery was about His salvific battle with the powers of darkness.

We heard in our Gospel, how in the garden, He suffered pain and anguish. We heard how He struggled to accept the chalice of suffering offered Him, but also prayed that the will of His Father be done. His struggle was similar to our struggle when we are faced with serious temptations. We heard how Judas whom He called friend betrayed Him and Peter denied Him. With our imagination, we can hear in His voice how saddened He was just as we are saddened when a close friend or a relative betray our trust. It was about the battle that freed us from sin and death. It was about the defeat of sins and death that the devil used in enslaving us

Jesus’ Passion and death was about the grace of God bringing salvation to all nations by the death on the cross of His only begotten Son. This battle was won by Jesus surrendering His will to that of His Father. It was through His obedience that He triumphed over the forces of evil. He laid down His life on His own terms and picked His life up on His own. He laid down His life so we can have eternal life with Him as our brother. By laying down His life, Christ taught us to always follow the will of God in humility and consider others more important than ourselves.

As we come with utmost reverence to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us thank Him for all He suffered for us so we could be saved.