

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily  
Sunday, March 28, 2021  
Palm Sunday  
Cycle B

There is a Greek verb which in the four Gospels is constantly used in connection with the Passion of Jesus, and that is the verb paradidomi. It is often translated by betray, but its basic meaning is clearly hand over. In the Gospels many people “hand over” Jesus: the Sanhedrin hands him over to Pilate. Pilate hands him over to the will of the people or the soldiers for execution. However, the one who is par excellence the person who hands over Jesus is Judas Iscariot. He is branded in all four gospels with this characteristic, as if it were his special trademark: 11 times in Matthew, 6 times in Mark, 5 times in Luke, and 10 times in John. In all, Judas is 32 times represented as “the one who handed Jesus over”.

Now one thing comes out clearly in the story of Jesus in this connection. We notice that, until he is handed over, he is active, fully in control of his life. However, the moment he is handed over he becomes completely passive, passed on from temple guards to Sanhedrin to Pilate to executioners – like a mere object. His days of autonomy and self-control are over. His Passion has begun. Notice that the words passion, patience and passivity all come from the same root. The Passion of Jesus, launched by the treachery of Judas, is the time of his passive waiting in total dependence on other people’s will.

We all share in Jesus’ Passion whenever we must patiently submit to unforeseen circumstances, to periods of illness, to loss of employment, to any form of passivity. Just waiting for something or someone brings us closer to the suffering of Jesus who has ceased all activity during his Passion and just waits for others to dispose of him.

Let us remember that, by accepting his passivity/Passion in patience, Jesus performed His greatest feat and saved the world. Paradoxically, he achieved the most by apparently doing the least. When illness or old age reduces us to passive inaction, let us patiently accept it in union with Jesus in His Passion. Thus our times of inactivity will prove supremely productive for

the coming of God's Kingdom. For God's ways are not ours. Doing nothing, when one has no other choice and patiently offers it to God, is like being nailed to the cross: it saves the world.