

Call to Surrender

Reflection by Fr. Silas Henderson, SDS

In his novel *Brighton Rock*, Graham Greene wrote, “You can’t conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone, the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God.” Lent is the time when the Church pauses to reflect on the reality of that mercy. And, when weighed against human standards, God’s mercy is appallingly strange because it costs us so little: God asks only that we surrender to his love and mercy.

For most of us, this process of “surrender” is one which unfolds gradually over the course of a life of prayer, service, struggle, and even setbacks. However, the temptation to choose our own way and will over God’s is never far away. And we can see the results—the consequences—of these selfish or self-centered choices all around us.



The call to surrender to God’s mercy is at the core of the Christian life and, in a particular way, the Season of Lent which will begin with Ash Wednesday on February 18. And yet, we also realize that there is a struggle that takes place in every human heart: “Lent would indeed be a futile liturgical farce,” writes Edna Hong, “if the redeemed were henceforth sinless and if the tides of human nature were not always moving even the twice-born [i.e. the baptized], who have not shed their human nature, in the direction of complacency and taking it all for granted... As long as the conscience of the born-again are housed in human flesh and bone, they are prone to the sleep of death and need continual rescuing.”

The Season of Lent ultimately reminds us that holiness is possible for us only when we enter into the struggle, remembering that whatever darkness we may encounter will not overtake us as long as we refuse to accept anything less than God’s love and mercy.

In the Divine Savior,

Fr. Silas Henderson, SDS

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Fr. Silas Henderson, SDS

Author, catechist, and retreat leader, Fr. Silas focuses on the dynamics of Christian discipleship as he brings together reflections on the liturgy, Sacred Scripture, and prayer. He also serves as Vicar Provincial for the USA Province Leadership Team.

