

MAY 18, 2025 – HOMILY BY MSGR. SAM BIANCO

“To the end.”

We have a phrase that says, “To the end of one's tether.” The idea of the phrase comes from the Middle Ages—from, of all things, falconry—when a falcon was attached by a tether to its handler. The falcon would be eager and anxious to break free and fly, but it was controlled. And because the tether was there, the falcon was constantly flapping its wings—frustrated, unable to take off and soar.

I'm sure animal rights activists would say it's a terrible image of what was done to birds. But the phrase expresses something deeper: when we try, and we're tired, and we're frustrated—not able to accomplish what we want or choose to do.

So much of that is present in the life of the Jesus whom we love and follow.

You'll recall the Gospel scene, recorded in Matthew, Luke, and Mark, where Jesus is presented with a young man possessed by a demon. The people were challenging him: “Why don't you do something about it?” The apostles couldn't help. And in an act of great frustration, Jesus says to the crowd, “How much longer must I put up with you? How much longer must I be with you? How much more must I bear with you?”

And the answer that came from Jesus' own life: he bore and put up with an awful lot more—with his disciples, with misunderstandings, with people's ignorance, and with their failure to express charity and love.

“To the end” means he stayed with them—and with us—through all of it.

He didn't just "put up" in a grudging way. Yes, there was pain and suffering. But the "end" meant to the moment of his death, to his last breath and last moments. "Lord, I put up with this, God our Father, because this will lift up the world. This will bring love and healing to all people who need it."

And we live, and move, and have our being in the fact that Jesus puts up with us—with all our failings and weaknesses.

We can think about this in our own lives. So many people are in relationships where they have to put up with failure, with misunderstanding. They wonder, "How long must I care for this sick person? How long must I be with them when there seems to be no light?"

And people look into their own hearts and ask, "Lord, how much longer must I put up with this addiction? With this inability to love? With my pettiness? With my sinfulness?"

The answer comes back powerfully through the life of Jesus: we do what he did.

"To the end" means Jesus is always with us. No matter the extent or the length of our suffering or pain, he accompanies us. He went through the same reality.

And "to the end" also means that if we are in a position to assist or help people, we may not do it perfectly—we're not Jesus—but we continue to try. In our tiredness, in our weariness, we ask him to renew our spirit. That we not give up on the care of others. That, as best we can, we not give up on our own failings—knowing that he is with us, to the end of all that suffering, and he brings it into himself.

Now, I've used "to the end" as a sign of frustration—at the end of Jesus' life, or the end of our own. But the word "end" can mean something else. And this is the beautiful part of the Gospel.

"End" can also mean the goal—the destination—where we're going. That's what shines through so beautifully in the life of Jesus. The "end" he's talking about is the vision.

Saint Paul writes, "This is the place where God lives with human beings." That's the goal. That's the direction in which we are heading.

Yes, in this life there is suffering and pain, and some joy. But it's the goal we're all moving toward—communion with God. That we understand the place where human beings live, and will live, is God's home as well.