

## **Views from the Pews - Heroism incarnate**

On this day, let us think about Paul's description of Jesus' steely courage in the face of every temptation to misuse his divine power to escape failure or danger: '[He], though he was in the form of God, ... emptied himself, ..... and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross'. (Philippians 2:5-11).

Think of Jesus giving Judas permission to leave the table, knowing that he would go immediately to Jesus' enemies in order to betray him: 'Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly"....and he went out' John 14: 27).

Think of Jesus rebuking his own disciples who tried to prevent his arrest: "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt 26:52-53).

Think of Jesus standing in front of Pontious Pilate, embodiment of terrifying Roman secular authority: Pilate, used to instant obedience, was finding Jesus' refusal to answer his questions infuriating. 'Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above"'. (John 19: 10-11).

Think of the last and fiercest temptation to use his power to convince the sceptics and end his voluntary suffering: '...the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to."' (Matt 27: 41-43)

Think of Jesus' despair as the sun's light failed at mid day, and he felt the presence of God withdrawn from him ( 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mark 34)) – and then, despite all, that final act of faith: "'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.'" Having said this, he breathed his last'. (Luke 23: 46).

Jesus' heroic selflessness and immovable trust in God was surely possible only for the true Son of the Father.

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