

Christ Jesus did not cling to equality with God, but emptied himself ...

Phil 2:6

A dear friend was dying. The onset of her disease had been sudden and its course swift. Despite its devastation, we clung to an initial shared pretense that things would return to normal. There were just a few months to reach the acknowledgement the cure was impossible. There were just a few weeks to refocus our hope on spiritual healing. One day she asked, “Am I dying?” Hearing a “yes,” she asked, “How will I know when it is time to let go?”

It is the question we all struggle with in both the small and large deaths in our lives. The beautiful Philippians hymn provides a sacred answer:

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
something to be grasped.
Rather, he emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness;
and found human in appearance,
he humbled himself,
becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.

The answer is daunting. In John’s Passion we hear that the disciples’ faith was shaken by this dawning awareness. Jesus himself begs his Father to take the cup away. It is a hard journey to follow Christ into the will of the Father. In this Passion Week, we strengthen ourselves by absorbing the transcendent love that allowed Jesus to trust even unto death. By God’s grace, we will drink of the same cup and share in the same Resurrection.