

Title: Into Your Hands I Commend My Spirit

Date: 4/10/2022 (Palm Sunday, Year C)

Location: St. Alban's Episcopal Church

Service: 10am Holy Eucharist (Hybrid)

Readings: [Luke 19:28-40](#); [Isaiah 50:4-9a](#); [Philippians 2:5-11](#); [Psalm 31:9-16](#); [The Passion according to Luke](#)

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/CWoNOV5qCx8?t=2130>

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit (Lk 23:46)  
Amen.

Please be seated.

At the end of this reading of the Passion,  
it feels like all I can do is pray these words over and over:

“**F**ather, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

“Father, into **y**our hands I commend my spirit.”

“Father, into your **h**ands I commend my spirit.”

One of my absolute favorite pieces of art is a sculpture by Auguste Rodin, called “The Cathedral.” Two right hands, each belonging to a different person,<sup>1</sup> emerge from the base of the sculpture. The two hands appear entwined yet are barely touching. The space formed between the hands evoke the nave of a cathedral, the central part of the church where the congregation gathers for worship.<sup>2</sup>

The space between the fingers and the hands shows us that God is not trapping us; we are not confined by God. We can choose to walk in and out as we please.

“Father, into your hands I **comm**end my spirit.”

“Father, into your hands I commend my **sp**irit.”

Here are a few other translations of this verse<sup>3</sup>:

Into your hands I **comm**it my spirit

Into your hands I **entr**ust my spirit

Into your hands I entrust my **lif**e

I put my life into your hands

When we walk into church, these walls can be for us a visible sign of the invisible hands of God. They remind us that we can choose to place ourselves into the hands of God, our spirit into God's keeping, and our life into God's hands. This sounds like a good and totally doable thing when things are going well, or are at least stable, but in the moments when everything is coming at us all at once, it's much harder.

Holy Week is all about tough moments like that.

Holy Week is overwhelming. To be clear, I'm NOT saying this because Holy Week is taking place during my second week on the job. I'm saying this because Holy Week is **designed** to overwhelm us. A wave of words and music come at us, cascade over us,

and surround us so we can be immersed in the events of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter.

Holy Week is designed to overwhelm us because it's all about the choices people make when they are feeling overwhelmed. Think back to the reading of the Passion you just heard. Peter. Pilate. Herod. The disciples. The chief priests and scribes. The criminals crucified on either side of Jesus.

In the moment when everything is coming at them all at once, into whose hands are they entrusting their spirit and their very life?

In that little garden on the Mount of Olives, even Jesus is feeling overwhelmed. Not once but twice he tells his disciples, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial," which sounds an awful lot like, "Pray that you don't end up like me."

Jesus himself prays, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me." Yes, he follows that with, "[Y]et, not my will be done but yours," but it sounds like he's wondering whether entrusting his life to God is the best choice, has been the best choice.

In moments like this, we're not just wondering about the choice we are about to make, we're questioning all the choices we've made that has brought us to this one.

Right after Jesus prays "not my will be done but yours," an angel from heaven appears to give him strength. But that doesn't mean everything is fine. I hadn't noticed these next sentences in previous years but they jumped out at me this year. "In his anguish he prayed even more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground." Even after an angel came from heaven to give him strength, Jesus continued to struggle to fully entrust his spirit and his life to God on this night, at this moment in his life.

When we are feeling overwhelmed, when we don't quite feel like we are in control of our lives, and we're not quite sure that God is control either, we are not the first to feel this way, and we will not be the last.

In those moments, let us remember that we are in good company, let us remember that this doesn't make us weak or unworthy. This simply makes us human and a child of God, just as Jesus was human and a child of God.

As we begin Holy Week, it's tempting to see Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday as a prelude to Easter. It's our nature to walk out of this service and immediately look to the next one. This Holy Week, I invite you to experience each of these days for themselves, to immerse yourself in the reading and experience of each day.

Notice something you hadn't noticed before. Find something that will stay with you.

Allow yourself to be overwhelmed. Allow yourself to be held by the hands of God.

Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.musee-rodin.fr/en/musee/collections/oeuvres/cathedral>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/nave>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/Psalm%2031:5>