
Practicing the Loss of Control – Part 2

An article for the *Cathedral Times* by the Very Rev. Sam Candler

A few weeks ago, I wrote about the practice of losing control. I said something about how healthy it is to learn how to lose control, gracefully! The reason is that all of us, at various points in our lives, do lose control. It is a part of the human condition, and it is surely a part of life itself. None of us lives without losing control, at some point or another. The art of being healthy is to learn how to lose control gracefully, with strength and resilience and patience and wisdom.

One of the graces of church participation is the grace that comes from practicing the loss of control. It's what we practice, starting with the remembrance—every Sunday—that Christ has died and Christ is risen. Death is surely the ultimate loss of control; resurrection is the new life that emerges from that loss. We are people of resurrection.

I mentioned some ways to practice losing control: sailing a sailboat, finding a community, engaging in prayer, playing with children, playing good competitive sports. As of this past Sunday, I present another example of how we can practice the loss of control. (I remind us, that the more we practice it, in smaller circumstances, the more we can deal wisely with the larger circumstances of loss.) This past Sunday, I saw all kinds of people losing control. They were losing control of their pets! When we observe the Feast of St. Francis by bringing all sorts of pets and animals to church, we also risk having them pull us around and do things we would rather not have them do! We lose control a little bit. It's good for us. Having a pet is good practice for learning how to lose control in a healthy way.

Further, however, I want to say a bit more about the residual fear that seems to linger among us after the pandemic. I am curious about how fearful much of our society has become. It doesn't seem to take as much to scare us! Our minds and imaginations jump to daring conclusions. What used to seem a small risk to us can loom as a huge one. Yes, in a kind of post-traumatic syndrome situation, many of us are wary and scared.

Last week, a trusted friend asked me how long it might take for us to recover from this stress. I do not know, but I figure it may take at least as long as it took to acquire it. It might take time. There may be no magic formula solution. It might take time, just like practice takes time. It takes time to practice living in joy again instead of fear.

Meanwhile, I repeat what I have said several times in the past three years. This is no time for the church to fall into its old pattern of being a police officer or an insurance agent. The world needs those roles, of course, but they are not the proper roles of the church. The church is to be a place of joy and liberation! The church is where we practice being freed from the stresses and guilts that bind us. That is what Saint Paul meant when he said to the Galatians, "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

Yes, let's practice joy. Our recent observance of the Feast of St. Francis may have given us a glimpse of that freedom! Let's practice some joy!



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