

JESUS

SPEAKS FROM THE CROSS

REFLECTIONS ON
THE SEVEN LAST WORDS



**“Father, forgive them,
they know not what they do.”**

(Luke 23:34)

We need to listen to Jesus' words of forgiveness as we bring before him our enemies, those people we most fear and despise. Jesus is constantly interceding not only for us but also for them, pleading that God's love and mercy be at the center of our lives and theirs. Can we pray to see our enemies as God sees them? It's not an easy prayer, and you may resist praying it as strenuously as I have. But when I pray to see the other person through the eyes of God, slowly I begin to see that the other person is wounded, hurting and imperfect, as I am; sinning, as I am; and yet beloved by God, as I am. This realization changes everything. It affects our behavior and our response. It sets us free from the reflexive urge to pursue revenge, enabling us to look for creative solutions to conflict. It sets us free from hatred, releasing our energy to seek fresh approaches to healing old wounds.

—Margaret Bullitt-Jonas
Christ's Passion, Our Passions

I N R I



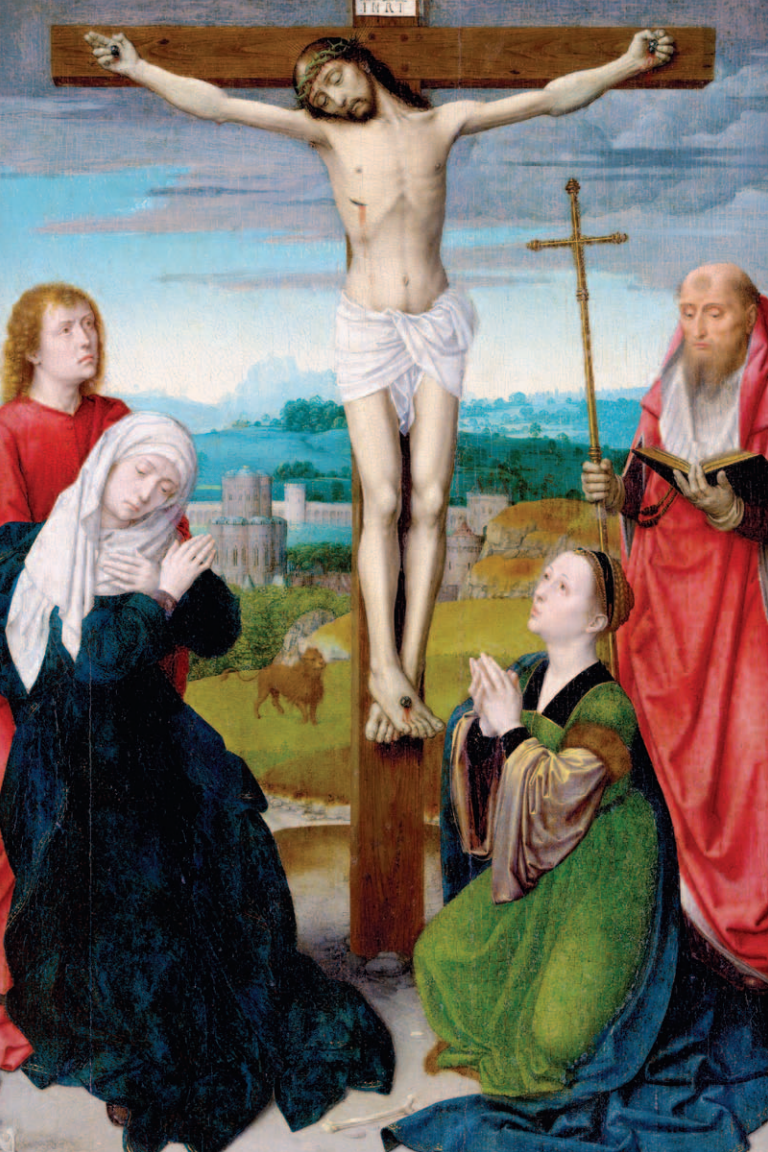
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“Amen, I say to you,
today you will be with me in Paradise.”

(Luke 23:43)

Luke places Jesus in the center, between two sinners. They are not just thieves, but also represent all humanity. One is entrenched in his own self, letting all the human sins he has chosen to live by be not simply exposed but also justified by his self-righteous holding onto them. The other acknowledges his sins because he now finds himself confronted by utter goodness. He accepts responsibility for his crimes and, turning to the One he knows to be innocent, the One he recognizes as having a “kingdom” in paradise, he in effect seeks forgiveness by asking to be remembered when Jesus comes into his kingdom. Jesus, who would have every human ever created to be forever in his kingdom, doesn’t respond with, “First, you have to be punished.” No, he says to the repentant sinner words that have resounded down through the centuries: “This day—you will be with me in paradise!” Paradise begins the moment we realize forgiveness.

—Antoinette Bosco
Radical Forgiveness



Jesus said to his mother,
“Woman, behold, your son.”
Then he said to the disciple,
“Behold, your mother.”

(John 19:26-27)

At the very source of the Church is Jesus’ entrustment of Mary and John at the foot of the cross to one another. He entrusts each of them to the care of the other with the result that, “from that hour the disciple took her to his own home” (Jn 19:27). Jesus’ words also summon us to develop the art of welcoming as the hallmark of our discipleship. Indeed, this was no simple act of piety, whereby Jesus entrusted his Mother to John so that she would not remain alone after his death. Instead, John’s welcoming of Mary into his home was a concrete sign of how we should live the supreme commandment of love and how important is the welcome we show to our neighbor! In entrusting them to each other’s care, Jesus urges the Christian community of every age not to lose sight of this priority. It is as if he said, “You have been saved by the same blood, you are one family, so welcome each other, love one another, heal each other’s wounds.” For God is present wherever love reigns!

—Pope Francis



About three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" which means,

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

(Matthew 27:46)

We can pray at moments when we become aware of our blindness—and we can include in this term whatever makes us blind to God and to all that surrounds us—and when we sense that the One who can cure us is passing near. Prayer arises at the moment when we become deeply aware of our separation and of the fact that our life is suspended over death, that nothingness is within us and lapping round us from all sides, ready to engulf us. And when we turn our gaze towards others, in place of that despair linked to an ultimate hope, it is compassion which awakes in us the capacity to suffer deeply, intensely, not the suffering of the other—for one can never suffer the suffering of another nor ever understand another—but one can suffer from the fact that he or she is suffering, and in a mysterious way, beyond all experience, participate within this unity of the Body of Christ, in the common suffering which is his.

—Anthony Bloom, Metropolitan of Sourozh
School for Prayer



After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, “**I thirst.**”

(John 19:28)

“I thirst,” Jesus said on the cross when he was deprived of every consolation, dying in absolute poverty, betrayed, left alone, despised and broken in body and soul. He spoke of his thirst—not for water—but for love, for sacrifice. Jesus is divine, therefore his love, his thirst is infinite. Our aim is to quench this infinite thirst of a God made human. Jesus’ real thirst was for souls—even as he hung there—dying, alone, despised. Who will bring those souls to him to satisfy that thirst of the infinite God dying of love? Can you and I continue to stand by, as mere spectators? Or pass by and do nothing? Let us try to come as close as the human heart can come to the heart of Jesus and try to understand as much as possible the terrible pain caused to him by our sins and his thirst for our love. No wonder it came out so clearly in the last moments of his human life when he said “I thirst.”

—St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta
Come Be My Light

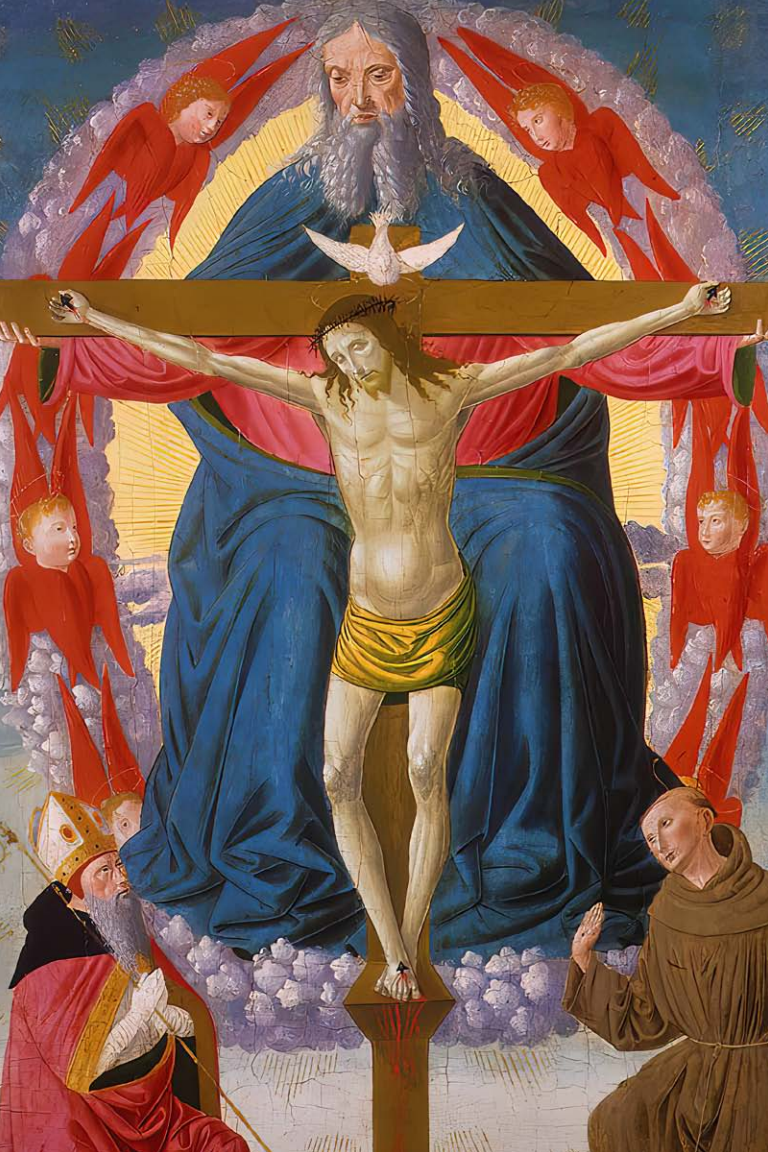


“When Jesus had taken the wine,
he said,
‘It is finished.’”

(John 19:30)

The cross and its achievement is so large and all-embracing that we really ought to stand back and simply gaze at it. We have belittled the cross, imagining it merely as a mechanism for getting us off the hook of our own petty naughtiness or as an example of some general benevolent truth. It is much, much more. It is the moment when the story of Israel reaches its climax; the moment when, at last, the watchmen on Jerusalem’s walls see their God coming in his kingdom; the moment when the people of God are renewed so as to be, at last, the royal priesthood who will take over the world not with the love of power but with the power of love; the moment when the kingdom of God overcomes the kingdoms of the world. The dark power that stood in the way of this kingdom vision has now been defeated, overthrown, rendered null and void. Its legions will still make a lot of noise and cause a lot of grief, but the ultimate victory is now assured.

—N.T. Wright
How God Became King

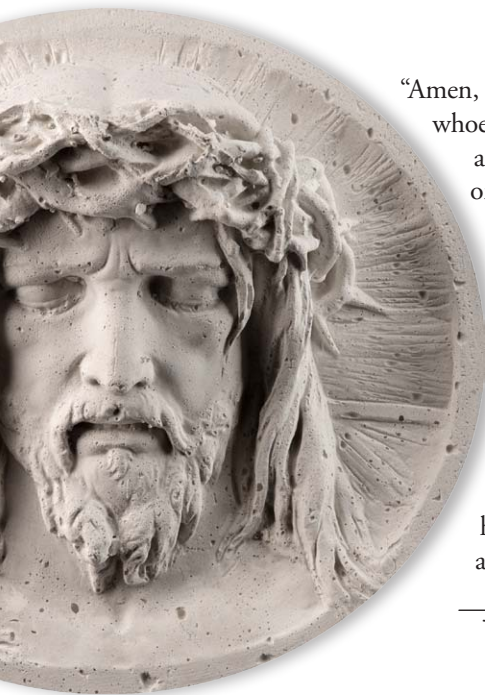


“Jesus cried out in a loud voice,
“**Father, into your hands
I commend my spirit**”
and when he had said this he breathed his last.

(Luke 23:46)

The only trustworthy pattern of spiritual transformation is death and resurrection. Death and life are two sides of the same coin; you cannot have one without the other. Each time you surrender, each time you trust the dying, your faith is led to a deeper level and you discover a Larger Self underneath. You decide not to push yourself to the front of the line, and something much better happens in the back of the line. You let go of your narcissistic anger, and you find that you start feeling much happier. You surrender your need to control your partner, and finally the relationship blossoms or ends. Yet each time it is a choice—and each time it is a kind of dying, which seems to be the pattern of all growth and evolution. It seems we only know what life is when we know what death is. Each in our own way have to eventually learn about letting go of something smaller so something bigger can happen.

—Richard Rohr
The Universal Christ



“Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life. It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

—*John 5:24; 6:63*

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