



From the Pastor's Desk:

The Seven Last Words of Christ: Reflections for Holy Week

First - Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing.

Do you really believe God has forgiven your sins? Do you take time on a regular basis to confess your sins so that you might enjoy the freedom of forgiveness? Do you need to experience God's forgiveness in a fresh way today? **Prayer:** May I live today as a forgiven person, opening my heart to you, choosing not to sin because the power of sin has been broken by your salvation.

Second - I assure you, today you will be with me in Paradise.

Have you staked your life on Jesus? Have you put your ultimate trust in him? Do you know that, when your time comes, you will be with him in paradise? **Prayer:** O Lord, though my situation is so different from the criminal who cried out to you, I am nevertheless quite like him. Today I live, trusting you and you alone. My life, but now and in the world to come, is in your hands. And so I pray: Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom! Jesus, remember me today as I seek to live within your kingdom! Amen.

Third - Dear woman, here is your son.

What does Mary's presence at the cross evoke in you? Why do you think was it necessary for Jesus to suffer physical pain as he died? **Prayer:** O Lord, how can I begin to thank you for what you suffered? My words fall short. My thoughts seem superficial and vague. Nevertheless, I offer my sincere gratitude for your suffering. Thank you for bearing my sin on the cross. I give you my praise, my love, my heart . . . all that I am, because you have given me all that you are.

Fourth - My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Have you taken time to consider that Jesus was abandoned by the Father so that you might not be? What does this "word" from the cross mean to you? **Prayer:** O Lord Jesus, though I will never fully grasp the wonder and horror of your abandonment by the Father, every time I read this "word," I am overwhelmed with gratitude. How can I ever thank you for what you suffered for me? What can I do but to offer myself to you in gratitude and praise? Thank you, dear Lord, for what you suffered. Thank you for taking my place. Thank you for being forsaken by the Father so that I might never be.

Fifth - I am thirsty.

How do you respond to Jesus' statement "I am thirsty"? What does this statement suggest to you about Jesus? About yourself? **Prayer:** Dear Lord, in your words "I am thirsty" I hear the cry of my own heart. I too am thirsty, Lord, not for physical drink. I don't need sour wine. Rather, I need the new wine of your kingdom to flood my soul. I need to be refreshed by your living water. I yearn for your Spirit to fill me once again. I am thirsty, Lord, for you. Amen.

Sixth - It is finished.

Do you live as if Jesus finished the work of salvation? To you have confidence that God will finish that which he has begun in you? **Prayer:** How can I ever find words to express my gratitude to you, dear Lord Jesus? You did it. You finished that for which you had been sent, faithful in life, faithful in death. You accomplished that which no other person could do, taking the sin of the world upon your sinless shoulders . . . taking my sin so that I might receive your forgiveness and new life.

Seventh - Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

Have you put your life and, indeed, your life beyond this life, in God's hands? How do you experience God's salvation through Christ in your life today? **Prayer:** Gracious Lord, even as you once entrusted your spirit into the hands of the Father, so I give my life to you. I trust you, and you alone to be my Savior. I submit to your sovereignty over my life, and seek to live for your glory alone. Here I am, Lord, available to you, both now and in the future.

May God +bless you, and yours, now and forever.

Father Anthony

