

Ask Fr. James

The Seven Last Words of Jesus from on Top of the Cross

1. **“Father forgive them . . .”**: Jesus invites us to challenge ourselves to forgiveness especially in instances of difficult relationships that we have found ourselves. The only action that will give one freedom is forgiveness.
2. **“Today you will be with me in Paradise”**: In Luke 23, the penitent criminal at the crucifixion makes a single plea: *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* What is the significance of this surprisingly personal appeal to Jesus? This is a confirmation to drop our human doubts about the afterlife.
3. **“Woman here is your son . . . here is your mother”** (John 19:26): This is the foundation and origin of our devotion to Mary. “From that time on this disciple took her into his home,” literally means that the crucified Jesus leaves behind, at the foot of the cross, a small community of faithful disciples who created a space for her in their home and their heart. The followers of Jesus became brother and sister to one another as they enter this new community with Mary as their mother.
4. **“My God, my God; Why have you forsaken me?”** (Matthew 27:46): As Jesus approached his passion he was ‘troubled and distressed’ and his soul was sorrowful, even to death, at about 3.00 O'clock in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, quoting Psalm 22,. Each year, on Good Friday we Christians stand once again near the cross and hear Jesus’ cry “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” anew.

Communication plays an important role in the relationship between God and us. Wound and pain create linkage with the divine who invites us to share our grief. When humanity suffers, God suffers.

5. **“I thirst:”** ‘After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had been accomplished, in order that the Scripture would be accomplished, said, “I thirst” (John 19:28). Jesus quotes Psalm 69:21 to fulfil scripture. ‘They gave me poison for food, and/or my thirst they gave me sour wine) to drink.’ Though the Jews, Pilate, and the soldiers are ignorant of or opposed to God's will, Jesus knows that he is accomplishing his Father's will as disclosed in Scripture. Jesus' thirst is primarily his thirst to drink 'the cup' the Father gave him. Because Jesus 'knew that he had come from God and was going back to God' (John 13:3), his thirst at the cross suggests further his earnest desire to return to his Father.
6. **“It is finished”**: When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (John 19:30). This statement refers to the reality of Jesus' death and also to his giving up his spirit - life giving power of Jesus' death. Salvation flows from the whole process of his glorification.
7. **“Father into your hands I commend my spirit”**: An examination of Jesus’ life suggests that suffering should be brought to God. Even when events in our world do not make sense, let's submit them to God.

A deep appreciation for these profound words of Jesus can bring happiness and satisfaction. Both saints and scholars have found guidance and solace in and through these words.

You may email/send your faith questions to Fr. James and he will answer them in our Sunday Bulletins.