

## **Good Friday April 14, 2017**

Hello and welcome to a special Good Friday Programme. Since the church does not celebrate the Holy Eucharist on Good Friday, today we shall meditate on the cross, sufferings and death of Jesus. Stay with us.

The Gospel according to St Matthew tells us: "Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside along the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him. And the third day he shall rise again." In this passage we have the third and last prediction of our Lord regarding His death and resurrection. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the centre of biblical revelation. It is the most important Christian truth. The theme of this particular announcement, however, takes us beyond the earlier two predictions. Whereas they talked about only His death and resurrection, this one stresses the nature and details of His suffering. He explains in detail that He will be betrayed and handed over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn Him to death and then hand Him over to the pagans. They in turn will mock, scourge, and finally crucify Him. After that Christ will rise from the dead. So the theme of this particular prediction by our Lord is His sufferings.

We exist in a day and time when much of Christ's work in redemption is taken for granted and the suffering that He went through is taken too lightly. We believe it's time well spent for us to once again look face to face at the suffering he actually went through to bring you and I the deliverance we enjoy today. We spend some time going through the Gospels and living out the walk of Christ from Gethsemane to the Cross. The four Gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—didn't go into great detail, and there was a reason for it. In those days, scourging and crucifixion were very common. It was nothing to walk down the road toward the city and see someone suffering the punishment of crucifixion. However, each Gospel writer gave some detail that point out the terrible suffering.

As we study about Christ's physical suffering, we truly experience his pain and at the same time do contemplate the agony of our saviour. What a price had to be paid for this very sin and the sinful nature of human kind. The sufferings of Jesus indicate how much God loves us, and how much Christ loves us, and continue to show that love to us. He would stand sufferings beyond that which any human

body ever stood up to or ever will stand up to. We know that human beings have suffered great things, but none has had to drink of the cup that He drank of, because there was so much in the contents of that cup. We want to answer the question of what the body of Jesus endured during those hours of torture. None of the Gospels give the entire pattern in sequence, but if you'll put them together, you'll get the whole walk of Christ from Gethsemane to Calvary. Gethsemane is where His torture really began. There's where He began to pay the price for our redemption. There's where the physical suffering first began to be laid upon Him as He bore the sins of the whole world.

The sufferings of Jesus Christ were no accident or miscalculation. He was able to give in exact detail all that was going to happen to Him. Among His first recorded words are these: "I must be about my Father's business". Just before His death He said, "It is finished", "it is accomplished." It is obvious that He knew what He was supposed to do and when He had finished it. The fact that Jesus knew every single detail of His sufferings indicates that He must have suffered through them a thousand times before He actually endured them. Being omniscient, He was able to conceive of all that His suffering would be. Jesus wanted the disciples to understand His sufferings. They anticipated the glories of the Kingdom and the Messiah--those prophecies they seemed to understand quite well. But they didn't understand that the Messiah had to suffer first. We can't be too hard on their ignorance because despite all that Jesus said they expected a great kingdom. The disciples were looking for a lion; they didn't know they needed a lamb. But Jesus knew about their weakness.

The Fidelity of Christ to the Father: The Gospel according to St Matthew says, "Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside along the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." There's a resolution and conviction in His statement. The gospel of Luke says, "He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." Jesus was resolute in His commitment. He finished His ministry. It was from there that He would begin His long ascent to Jerusalem. It was now only a matter of days until He would face His death and resurrection. While on the way to Jerusalem, Jesus again felt a need to communicate to His disciples about what was going to happen. It may have sounded shocking and strange to the disciples, but that was exactly where they were going. Mark says that Jesus walked in front of the disciples. He was like a commander leading his troops into battle, putting Himself in the most dangerous and vulnerable position.

Jesus steadfastly moved toward His death on behalf of His disciples. Their anticipation of the Kingdom mingled with their fear of death.

Jesus Predicts his Suffering. Christ predicted in great detail what would happen to Him. But how did He know all that? There's only one who could know, and that is God. Jesus Christ is God in human flesh. He was no ordinary man. He told His disciples to get the foal of a donkey and told them what would be said when they asked the owner for the animal. Now Jesus says that He would be betrayed. The Greek verb for "betrayed" means "to be handed over." But it is obvious that it implies betrayal. Judas turned Him over to the Jewish leaders, thus betraying Him. The chief priests and scribes made up the executive body of the Temple priesthood that ultimately condemned Jesus Christ to death because He so threatened the security of their system. Jesus knew He would be betrayed to them. The priests rejected Christ. They were in a position to pull off a mock trial and condemn Him to death. That was no surprise to Him.

The Jewish leaders couldn't kill Him because the Romans had removed their right to execute people. So they had to give Him over to the Gentiles, which they did after they brought some false charges against Him. Ultimately the charge was that He spoke against Caesar as recorded in the Gospel of John. Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, couldn't find anything wrong with Him, but he finally succumbed to crucifying Him because of pressure from the Jewish leaders. They told Pilate they would tell Caesar if he didn't. Pilate already had many attacks against him in his relations with the Jews. If one more had occurred, the emperor probably would have removed Pilate from his position, and perhaps even would have killed him.

Once Jesus was condemned to death the following things took place: First, He was mocked. They mocked about his being a Messiah, his divinity, his miracles and healing, his teaching and his kingship. Roman soldiers put a reed in His hand, spat all over Him, and jeered at Him. Secondly, He was scourged. They lacerated His back with leather thongs, in which were bits of bone and metal at the end. Then they laughed at Him in scorn. Thirdly they placed on his head a crown of thorns and placed a purple robe on him. They had taken the thorny branches, weaved them into a crown and placed on his head to mock him as a king. Then he was taken in a procession through public streets and market places to be laughed at, mocked and insulted and to be made an object lesson to people. Finally, he was taken to Golgotha and there they crucified him. It was a brutal act. They nailed his hands and legs and raised him high to be hanging between heaven and earth. He

was allowed to suffer in agony, with thirst, fever and the fear of death. He had no one close to him. They allowed him to die alone. The Romans crucified Him but He rose from the dead.

His Moral Sufferings: The Gospels give us the details regarding the sufferings of Jesus. Jesus' suffering was not one dimensional. The proportion of His suffering is beyond anything we can ever consider. Many of us limit our perception of Christ's suffering to the nails driven through His hands, the spear thrust through His side, scourging at the pillar or the crown of thorns jammed on His head. There is little question of that bringing about a great deal of suffering. First century Jewish historian Josephus told of three men who were crucified. They were left until such a time when they should have been dead. But two of them lived. So crucifixion by itself didn't always kill its victim. That is why the executioners would scourge those whom they especially wanted to die. The resulting blood loss and exposure of the internal organs, coupled with the pain involved, would make death inevitable in crucifixion.

There was much more to the suffering of Christ than just His physical suffering on the cross. Generally our bodies have an amazing ability to cope with shock and trauma. Psychologically a person bears his suffering which can be more painful. Prophet Isaiah tells us about the suffering servant who had neither form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him; there is no beauty that we should desire him. He suffered from being ugly and being rejected; he was despised. Jesus suffered the sorrow of grief and the lack of esteem and respect. He suffered the internal pain of being despised and rejected. Remember who this is: Jesus, God in human flesh, was never worthy of that kind of suffering! He suffered for others: he suffered for us. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and with his wounds we are healed. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He didn't even defend Himself. He was cut off from the land of the living; He made his grave with the wicked. He suffered from being counted as a common criminal in His burial. He suffered even though he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. It is overwhelming to conceive of the proportion of the sufferings of our Lord. And that's what was on His heart as He went up the hill to Jerusalem.

The entire Passion was very painful for Jesus. There were seven processions, after the Cenacle where he had the Last Supper. From the meal he went to Gethsemane , the Mount of Olives, then to Annas, to Caiaphas, to Pilate, to

Herod, back to Pilate, to Calvary, and finally to the Grave. The worst of the processions was from Pilate's palace to Calvary. He was taken through the public places and market squares. He had taught in those places, walked freely as a preacher, healed the sick, made the lame walk and gave sight to the blind. Now he is taken as a criminal bound to the cross. The same people, who followed him and listened to him, now laugh at him and shout "crucify him." Jesus suffers deeply at every step he takes during his procession.

Jesus suffered the pain of disloyalty knowing fully well that He would soon be betrayed. Much of this suffering came in anticipation of the event. Since He knew it was going to happen, He suffered the pain before it happened. Jesus loved Judas; He walked and talked with him for three years and affirmed His love for him and gave him responsibilities. Yet Judas betrayed Him with a kiss. Christ suffered the betrayal of one who violated the intimacy of friendship. Peter his close friend and a person who promised loyalty to him unto death denied that he knew him in front of the maid, soldiers and other Jewish people. All the other disciples ran away when he needed them the most.

Jesus was rejected by his own people. Jesus was turned over to the chief priests and scribes, and they condemned Him to death. St John says: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not". The leaders rejected Him. St Peter says that he was the cornerstone the builders rejected. The people of His own nation--those He healed and taught--rejected Him. Such infidelity alone would be sufficient to kill a person. He was betrayed by a friend and rejected by His people. At this moment it looked as if Jesus was rejected not only by men, but also by God. He says: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matthew says, "All the disciples forsook him, and fled." Jesus didn't have anyone left. He was rejected by the people, by the disciples, and by God. The Jews were always tribe conscious and were loyal to the group in which they lived. Now his own tribe rejects him and that would have pained him a great deal.

Jesus bore all Humiliation. The Passion Narratives tell us that they mocked Him and humiliated him. They pulled at His beard, crammed a crown of thorns on His head, stuck a reed in His hand, put a purple robe on Him, and mocked by calling Him a king. They spat on His face. They insulted, scorned, ridiculed Him and beat him. Then they nailed Him to a cross naked before the whole world. He was nailed between two thieves. The glorious, sinless Son of God was humiliated when He should have been exalted. Yet He never retaliated. As human beings we cannot imagine what it would have been like for Him to suffer such humiliation.

There was Injustice in the entire trial and condemnation. The Romans scourged and crucified Him because He had been condemned. He was held responsible for something He was not guilty of. If any of us were accused of something we weren't guilty of, and it demanded a severe penalty, we would scream and shout at the top of our voice. But in silence Christ was obliged to accept the responsibility for sins He never committed. All the guilt of all the people who ever lived was put on Him. Imagine a person to be put to death for a crime he hadn't committed.

Those four things alone--the pain of betrayal, rejection, humiliation, and injustice--would be enough to kill any man. We see Christ agonized over those things in the Garden of Gethsemane. The suffering of His soul over those things almost killed Him, prompting His body, as St Luke says, to sweat great drops of blood. The nails in His hands were nothing compared to the pain of bearing all the sins of all the people who ever lived or the pain of enduring humiliation and rejection when you deserve exaltation.

At the same time there were the Physical Sufferings. There was the physical injury. Scourging was a horrible thing. Forty lashes were given by both the Jews and the Romans. The Jews always stopped one short of forty because they didn't want to break the law. The Romans gave thirteen lashes across the chest, and then thirteen on each shoulder. It usually took two men to do it because one wasn't strong enough to continue the whipping at the desired pace. The victim's hands were tied to a post so the body slumped. When the scourging was complete the organs would be exposed. The bleeding was often so profuse that many would die. Jesus suffered a tremendous amount of physical pain before He even reached the cross. That is why they had to force Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross for him.

Jesus dies on the Cross. The Gospels tell us that Jesus hung on the cross for three hours and died. How did Jesus die? We do not assume that He died from the nails in His hands; nor did the crown of thorns kill Him; nor did he die because of possible the suffocation. But He died from cumulative grief, anxiety, pain, and suffering. However, the greatest suffering is not physical; it is the suffering of the soul. Isaiah, in his hymn of the Servant gives us the understanding of the degree of Christ's suffering. That's what Christ tried to tell the disciples, but they didn't come close to understanding because the next thing we read is about James and John's attempt to reserve seats in the Kingdom next to Christ. They were completely insensitive. Here among other thing that Jesus suffered was the pain

of unsympathetic friends. He experienced the suffering that comes when a person needs support, but finds they're unresponsive to the needs because they are so involved in seeking their own glory.

There was Power and authority in the Suffering of Jesus. He goes to his suffering courageously. He was aware of his suffering and knew that suffering was not the end of everything. He knew he would rise again. So he says let us go and meet them. He goes to his suffering with fore knowledge, being fully aware of the situation and the events that would come. He was aware that his disciples would run away. He knew that one would betray him and his close disciple and friend would deny him. He knew that he would be alone. Yet he knew he was not alone. His Father was with him and he being faithful to him would raise him up on the third day. That is the power He had over His sufferings. He said He would conquer death and come out victorious.

As human beings, we do not like to suffer and we don't want to die. Sometimes, even to hear the word "suffering" makes us shiver. However, everyone who follows Christ will suffer, though we really don't want to. Peter deeply understood this problem. Once when Jesus foretold his own suffering and death, Peter rebuked him. Then Jesus rebuked Peter in a way that he did not forget. Since then Peter learned the secret to overcoming sufferings, and he passed it on to us: We must accept suffering with a right attitude. That means we must arm ourselves with the attitude of Christ, and we must decide to die to sin and obey the will of God.

Mary is our model for witnessing suffering. We all experience sadness through our own suffering, and have witnessed the suffering of those close to us. In The Passion we see how Mary witnessed the terrible ordeals of her own son being humiliated before the elders, dragged before Pilate for judgment, scourged nearly unto death, and finally nailed to a cross to die. We now realize the fullness of Mary's humanity as we saw the intensity of her shock, disbelief and intense sorrow as she remained with her son into his death. In the midst of sufferings Mary comes as a tower of strength. She has the ability to endure the suffering and death of her son. She was aware that he was the king of the universe. The angel had told her at the annunciation. Now she knows that through his death on the cross he would redeem the world. She had courageously sent her only son into the public ministry. She is the one with the help of some women followed him on his way of the cross. She is the mother who stays with him near his cross and gives him the support he needs. When they mock him to come down the

cross and that they would believe him, she wants him to stay on the cross for she has already believed in him and will make others believe at the Pentecost.

The intensity of both Mary's suffering and her love for her son are vividly portrayed in the scene where Mary and John scurry through the narrow streets in an attempt to see Jesus. Christ appears from behind the buildings ahead. His body weakened by scourging and the crown of thorns; he bends under the weight of the cross and falls to the rocky street. Mary stops short of the scene. She slumps on a doorstep, sighing in grief, immobilized by shock and fear. She knows that her son is divine. She knows that this was to be his earthly fate. But she remains a human mother watching her child suffer. Each of us can resolve to imitate Mary in our own lives, by reaching out in love and compassion to assist and comfort others who are suffering. At times this can be relatively easy, such as simply spending time with a friend who is suffering with a problem and may need someone to listen. At other times the witnessing of suffering may require much greater effort, such as when a loved one is dying from a painful illness. During the times when our suffering is most intense, we can remember Mary in The Passion. Yes it can be hard, and at times we may feel as Mary did- that we can't go on. Yet Mary teaches us that through our love for others, rooted in our love for God, and faith in the resurrection and power of God's grace, we have the strength and courage to persevere through any suffering the world presents.

You just heard a special reflection on the cross, sufferings and death of Jesus on the occasion of Good Friday. This programme helps us to meditate on the sufferings and death of Jesus. As end this programme we pray to the Lord the grace to remain close to him and await the joy of the Resurrection.

### **The Seven Last Words of Christ: Reflections for Good Friday April 14, 2017**

Hello and welcome to the special Good Friday programme. The church celebrates on this day the death of Jesus on the cross, and contemplates on his sufferings and death. While hanging on the cross Jesus is close to his Father in his Prayer. Let us now prayerfully listen to the last few words of Jesus. The Evangelists have faithfully recorded for us the last seven words of Jesus.

The First Word: Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing.

The Second Word: I assure you; today you will be with me in Paradise.

The Third Word: Dear woman, here is your son. And to John, this is your Mother.

The Fourth Word: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

The Fifth Word: I am thirsty.

The Sixth Word: It is finished.

The Seventh Word: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

The First Word: "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."  
(Luke 23:34)

It makes sense that the first word of Jesus from the cross is a word of forgiveness. That's the main point of the cross. Jesus is dying so that we might be forgiven for our sins, so that we might be reconciled to God for eternity. He forgives all those who unjustly condemned him and brought him to the cross to die a shameful death. He tells the Father that they are not aware of what they are doing. But the forgiveness of God through Christ doesn't come only to those who don't know what they are doing when they sin. In the mercy of God, we receive his forgiveness, even when we deliberately do something wrong. God chooses to forgive us and wipe away our sins, not because we have some convenient excuse, not because we have tried hard to make up for them, but because he is a God of amazing grace, with mercies that are new at every moment. As we hear the words, "Father, forgive them," may we understand that we are forgiven through Christ. Because Christ died on the cross for us, we are cleansed from all wickedness, from every last sin.

Gracious Lord Jesus, it's easy for me to speak of your forgiveness, even to ask for it and to thank you for it. Today I need the freedom that comes from the assurance that you have cleansed me from my sins. Dear Lord, I believe that you have forgiven me, yet this amazing truth needs to penetrate my heart in new ways. Help me to know with conviction that I am totally forgiven, not because of any merit of mine, but because of your grace and forgiving love for me. May I live today as a forgiven person, opening my heart to you and others, spreading your message of forgiveness to all, Amen.

Hymn

The Second Word: "I assure you; today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)

As Jesus hung on the cross, he was mocked by the leaders and the soldiers. One of the criminals being crucified with him added his own measure of scorn. But the other crucified criminal sensed that Jesus was being treated unjustly. He also reprimands his co-criminal for his harsh mocking words against Jesus. After speaking up for Jesus, he cried out, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus responded to this criminal, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise." Paradise was sometimes thought to be the place where righteous people went after death. Here we encounter one of the most astounding and encouraging verses in all of Scripture. Jesus promised that the criminal would be with him in paradise. Yet the text of Luke gives us no reason to believe this man had been a follower of Jesus or even a believer in him. He might have felt sorry for his sins, but he did not obviously repent. Rather, the criminal's cry to be remembered seems more like a desperate, last-gasp effort. Jesus, embodying the mercy of God, says "You will be with me in paradise." We too are welcome there into his kingdom because God is merciful and we have put our trust in Jesus.

Dear Lord Jesus, how I wonder at your grace and mercy! When we cry out to you, you hear us. When we ask you to remember us when you come into your kingdom, you offer the promise of paradise. Your mercy, dear Lord, exceeds anything we might imagine. It embraces us, encourages us, and heals us. Today I live, trusting you and you alone. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom! Jesus, remember me today as I seek to live within your kingdom! Amen.

Hymn: Father Remember me

The Third Word: "Dear woman, here is your son." He said to John "She is your Mother." (John 19:26)

As Jesus was dying, his mother was among those who had remained with him. Most of his disciples had fled, with the exception of one, John, whom the Gospel calls "the disciple he loved." Jesus deeply loved his mother and wanted to make sure she would be in good hands after his death. The presence of Mary at the cross adds both humanity and horror to the scene. We are reminded that Jesus is human and had lived in a family. He truly understood the family affection and the need of caring. Even as he is dying on the cross as the Saviour of the world, Jesus remembers his role as a son, which he didn't neglect even in his last moments. He can feel and experience the pain of his mother suffering for him. He now presents his beloved disciple to Mary and with that act he offers the other disciples and the

entire humanity to her. Jesus tells John that Mary is a Mother to him and to all the disciples. A new bond is built and a new family is set up. From this moment on Mary will take care of each one of us. We become her children in the Son.

Lord Jesus, even in the midst of your sufferings on the cross you did not forget any one of us, and specially your dear mother. While giving her a son to take care of her, you provided for each one of us a mother, who will understand our sufferings and pain. Today Jesus the presence of your mother at the cross engages my heart. Allow me to stand near Mary my mother, to console her and be consoled by her. Let me enter joyfully into this new family and remain close to her and experience her consoling love Amen.

Hymn:

The Fourth Word: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Mark 15:34)

As Jesus was dying on the cross, he echoed the beginning of Psalm 22, which reads:

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

Why are you so far away when I groan for help?

Every day, I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.

Every night you hear my voice, but I find no relief.

In the words of the psalmist Jesus found a way to express the cry of his heart: Why had God abandoned him? Why did his Father turn his back on Jesus in his moment of greatest agony? We will never fully know what Jesus was experiencing in this moment. He is suffering alone on the cross and it seems as if his loving Father has stayed away from him. No one was able to reach out to him. His only consolation now is the prayer he learnt from his mother and he recites the psalm taught by Mary when he was young. Yet, this was the moment of trust for Jesus in his loving Father. He knows his Father will not abandon him. Let us remain with Jesus in his loneliness.

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. Permit me to stand near you with Mother Mary and offer my consolation to you, Amen.

Hymn

The Fifth Word: Jesus says: "I am thirsty." (John 19:28)

No doubt Jesus experienced extreme thirst while being crucified. He would have lost a substantial quantity of bodily fluid, both blood and sweat, through what he had endured prior to crucifixion. There was the fear, pain and anxiety. Thus his statement, "I am thirsty" was, on the most obvious human level, a request for something to drink. In response, the soldiers gave Jesus sour wine, a cheap beverage common among lower class people in the time of Jesus. John notes that Jesus said "I am thirsty," not only as a statement of physical reality, but also as a fulfilment of his mission. The mission was to save the world through his suffering and his death. Now he is thirsting to receive everyone into his fold to build his spiritual Kingdom. As we reflect on the words of Jesus, "I am thirsty," let us bring to mind our own thirst and desires. We are thirsting for him and our soul is yearning for the living water that Jesus supplies. At this moment, let us remain with Jesus, so that our thirst for the water of life might be quenched.

O Lord, I want to express my gratitude to you for your suffering on the cross for my sake. Besides this extraordinary physical pain, you also experienced extreme thirst. All of this was part of the divine mission as you took upon yourself the task of redeeming mankind from sin. Dear Lord, in your words "I am thirsty" I add my cry of my own heart. I too am thirsty, Lord, not for the fresh living water of your kingdom. I need to be refreshed by your presence in my heart. I yearn for your Spirit to fill me once again. I am thirsty, Lord, for you. Amen.

Hymn

The Sixth Word: "It is finished!" (John 19:30)

When Jesus said "It is finished," surely he was not expressing relief that his suffering was over. "It is finished" meant it is accomplished; the work of his Father is finally done. Jesus had fulfilled through his suffering and death, the mission given to him at his incarnation. He had announced and inaugurated the kingdom of God. He had revealed the love and grace of God throughout his public life. He had expressed that love and grace by dying for the sin of the world. He had

shown to the world what truly the Kingdom of God is. In the midst of suffering Jesus had the joy of fulfilling a task. Jesus completed the mission for which he had been sent, and we are the beneficiaries. But this is not the end. His mission will continue in and through us and we all have the task to fulfil. We know that nothing can separate us from God's love as it was in the life of Jesus. One day what God has begun in us will also be finished, when God will unite us all together in Jesus.

Dear Lord Jesus, how can I ever find words to express my gratitude to you? You accomplished the task for which you had been sent, faithful in life, faithful in death faithful to the mission. You accomplished all that no other person could do, taking the sin of the world upon your sinless shoulders. You took upon yourself my sin so that I may receive your forgiveness and new life. You have built the new family, the mystical body to experience truly your love. Thank you Lord Jesus for accepting me and making me part of your kingdom, Amen.

Hymn: Abba Father

The Seventh Word: "Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit." (Luke 23:46)

The Gospel according to Luke gives us the final word of Jesus: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." On the most obvious level Jesus is simply entrusting himself to God as he dies. He's saying, "My life and my death are in your hands." As we reflect upon this final word of Jesus from the cross, we are struck, by the love, trust and confidence Jesus places in his Father. He started his mission trusting of being his beloved son and the chosen one. He entered his sufferings and passion trusting in his Father and telling him if it is his will he will drink the chalice given to him. Jesus now gives his very life to his beloved Father fully assured that it is safe with him. His Father will raise him up on the third day. The prayer of Jesus before his death is a prayer of repose from the psalm which is normally said before a person sleeps at the end of the day, placing his very person in the hands of God.

Gracious Lord, even as you once entrusted your spirit into the hands of the Father, I too give my life to you. I trust you, and you alone to be my Saviour. I submit to your sovereignty over my life, and seek to live for your glory alone. Here I am, Lord, always available to you, to work for your mission. As you entrusted your spirit into the Father's hands, you did it with love and hope of your

resurrection. Give me the grace to live in that hope to leave the sadness of Good Friday behind and look for the Easter joy, Amen.

Hymn: Into your hands I commend

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