

From 1951 until 1966, Venerable Fulton J. Sheen would preach at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York every Good Friday. His topic was The Seven Words from the Cross - sometimes called The Seven Last Words of Christ. Sheen wrote in his book "The Life of Christ:"

*There was never a preacher like the dying Christ;
there was never a congregation like that which gathered about the
pulpit of the Cross; there was never a sermon like the Seven Last
Words.*

Of those seven "words" - actually they were phrases - three are from St. Luke's Gospel, one is found in both St. Matthew and St. Mark's Gospel, and three are from St. John's Gospel - which we just heard read.

St. Luke gives us:

*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do
Truly, I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise
Father, into your hands I commit my spirit*

The other two synoptics give us:

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

And three more which we just heard.

The first is:

*"Woman, behold, your son."
"Behold, your mother."*

In this text, Our Lord is addressing His Blessed Mother, and the Apostle John. But He is doing more than just that. He doesn't say "Mary, behold ..." nor does He say "John, behold ..." Rather, in this single act, Our Lord is preparing Our Lady to be the Mother of the Church ... the Mother of all Disciples. She brought forth the physical Body of Jesus after nine months of pregnancy ... and now, She is to nurture the Mystical Body of Christ - that is, the Community of Believers ... the Church. And we are not to take her for granted - rather, we - as beloved disciples of Jesus - are to honor her as mother ... by His command.

Our Lord's second word from St. John's Gospel is:

"I thirst."

This is more than a statement of a physical need. Rather, Our Lord thirsts for souls ... He thirsts for the hearts of all people to turn toward God and return a modicum of love ... in return for the infinite Love God has shown to us ... and the infinite Love He is showing in His sacrifice on the Cross.

An the third and last word from John's Gospel is:

"It is finished."

Jesus isn't just clocking out. Again, this word has more than a temporal meaning. Rather, His mission is complete ... but what that means even more so, is that the long reign of sin has ended. Our Salvation is complete ... if only we might realize this gift ... and allow Him to save us from ourselves.

In a few moments, we will pray for the needs of all people ... followed by adoration of the Cross ... and then Holy Communion.

Let us join our hearts ... and our minds ... and our souls ... with Our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. May our prayers, united with His ... in some way quench His thirst for souls ... as we reverence the instrument of our redemption, let us recognize our desperate need for His saving power ... and as we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... may we be united with Him in as we receive ... the Most Blessed Sacrament ... of Holy Communion.