

Lenten Reflections 2018

The Seven Last Words of Jesus



The Seven Last Words of Jesus—Week 4: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

By Sister Maureen Crissy

Meditation

We sometimes have a tendency to romanticize or soften into a nice story the scripture readings, such as describing “a peaceful, serene image” of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Just ask any mother about childbirth!

The image of Jesus literally being nailed to wood can hardly ever be thought of in that manner. And this cry from

Jesus—“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”—strikes such a desperate chord. Yes, the pain and despair that Jesus experienced were excruciating, but they were blessed by the healing and hope of resurrection. As we look across the world at the injustice and pain experienced by children, women, men and Earth, perhaps we hear the cry of “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,” or perhaps, “My brothers and sisters, why have you forsaken me?” In his life on Earth Jesus revealed the response to this heart-wrenching question: “Love one another as I have loved you.”

Jesus freely took on suffering and pain. He so wanted to be one with us when we feel forsaken. He truly understands those held captive by injustices and hurts in our world. He teaches by example to cry out to God, to believe, to hope and to trust in the resurrection.



©Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

Reflection

Familiar words were spoken to me when engaging an elderly woman, Angelina, who was living in deplorable conditions with her 29 cats. She recounts breaking into her boarded-up room one night to feed her pets and in despair screamed aloud, “God, what is hope? Where is hope? There is no hope!”

Following a total eviction, Angelina was taken to our residence for women in similar situations. She asked, “What’s the name of this place?” On hearing the answer, Women of Hope, she exclaimed, “My God, my God, there is hope!” Little by little, Angelina realized that God had not forsaken her. She began taking steps to recover from the scars of homelessness, mental illness and the loss of family and friends. With good health care, a strong community and a willingness to choose life once again, Angelina emerged from a life of despair and became magnet for others who needed hope in their lives. Her arms, which once felt nailed to a cross, now stretched out as extensions of her heart. Her brilliant mind captured the attention of many, and her tender spirit caused others to fall in love with this gentle giant who was less than five feet tall.

Invitation

Many in our world, country, neighborhood, church, community and perhaps in our own home or within our very self at times cry out, “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?” Needs and challenges are all around us—children, people who are poor, the unborn, people who are elderly, people who are incarcerated, immigrants, those who are abused, those who are homeless, those caught in addictions, those who are lonely or forgotten. Perhaps during these Lenten days, we can acknowledge what has felt forsaken in our own life or in the life of someone else and reach out to bring hope to what seems like a hopeless situation.

Art by Sister Genemarie Beegan