

Lenten Reflections 2018

The Seven Last Words of Jesus



The Seven Last Words of Jesus—Week 7: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit!”

By Sister Marian Clare Valenteen

Meditation

“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit!” This prayer—coming from deep in the heart, soul and body of Jesus on the cross and recorded only in the Gospel of Luke—resonates very closely with the familial tone of the prayer of Jesus with his Father in Chapter 17 of St. John’s Gospel. That chapter begins with Jesus turning intimately in a centering prayer with the One who sent him: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son ... let him give eternal life to all those whom you have entrusted to him.”



We have known that Jesus prayed often throughout his ministry, alone in the desert, alone in the hills. We have heard the voice from heaven at the baptism of Jesus: “You are my Son, my beloved, my favor rests on you.” We have heard the voice from heaven at the transfiguration on the mountain: “This is my Son, the beloved, the chosen one, listen to him!”

It is not until the Last Supper that we hear the prayer of the Son to the Father spoken aloud in the presence of others. And now on Calvary we hear again the prayer of the Son spoken aloud for the final time on Earth: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

Reflection

Jesus' final prayer on the cross is the continuation of the filial prayer of Jesus with his Father at the Last Supper, shared with the community of his followers:

“I have glorified you on Earth ... I have made your name known ... I have given them the teaching you gave to me ... I am not asking you to remove them from the world ... but to protect them ... Consecrate them in the truth ... Father, may they be one in us so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them” (John 17).

This is the *Suscipe* of Jesus, and it is echoed in the [Suscipe of Catherine McAuley](#), foundress of the Sisters of Mercy:

“My God, I am Yours for time and eternity.
Teach me to cast myself entirely
into the arms of Your loving Providence
with a lively, unlimited confidence in your compassionate, tender
pity.”

In other words: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

Invitation

Let Jesus' prayer also be our prayer as we dedicate each new day to a life of loving compassion and confidence in God.

Let us ask for the grace of God in the prayer of Jesus “that all may be one” (John 17) through living a “revolution of tenderness” (Pope Francis) that will deepen our relationship with God and one another. May it also intensify our lives of loving service to those in need with others who seek a more just and inclusive world.

Art by Sister Genemarie Beegan