

Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit

by Jill M Munoz

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The Good Friday Tenebrae service is about to begin. I anticipate listening to the words of Christ spoken from the cross. My sin nailed Him there; my sin and the sins of the whole world. I cannot keep the law, and my sin condemns me as we acknowledge in our confession, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” By going to the cross, Christ suffered and died, not only to save us from our sins but to give us eternal life with Him in heaven.

As I contemplate His sacrifice for me, I focus on the seven words He spoke that long-ago day...words directed to His Father, to a repentant thief, to a grieving mother, to His executioners. And what’s so amazing is that these words also speak to me as I sit in silence on a Good Friday some 2,000 years later.

After each word from the cross is spoken, a candle is extinguished. Slowly, darkness begins to overshadow the sanctuary. When I

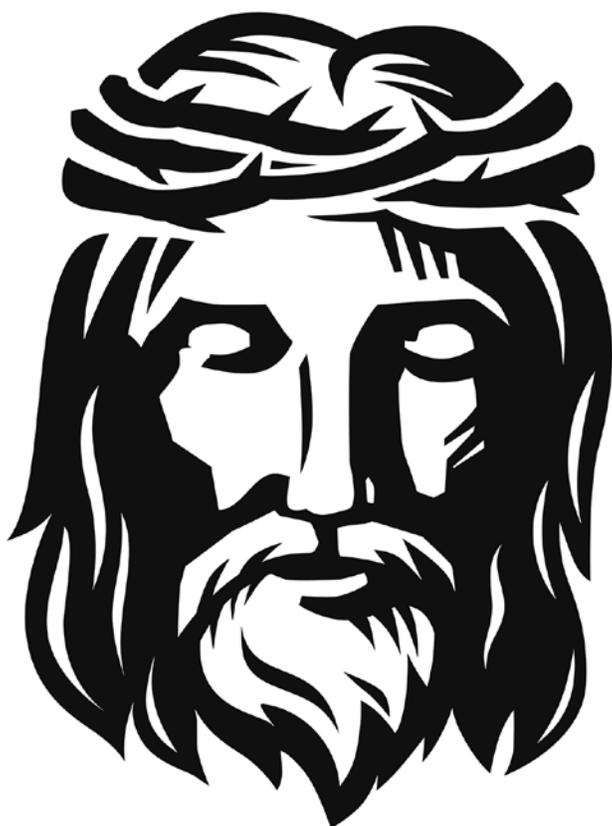
hear the cry—“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”—my heart cries out too. Because of my sin, God the Father had to forsake His only begotten Son. But God will never forsake me. And when the final words are spoken, the church falls into darkness.

Thud! The strepitus* jars me with its discordant sound. The Christ candle is removed. I think of the despair the followers of Jesus must have felt. But before the congregation leaves in silence, the Christ candle is returned to remind us of the hope of the resurrection.

As I make my way home from the service, I ponder the message of Good Friday. Death is unavoidable. It can be scary. It is unknown. Fear can rear its ugly head regarding pain, suffering, and separation from loved ones. But Jesus has already taken the death I deserve and He gives me His life and salvation.

Setting my eyes on Christ, I face my own death.

*The strepitus is a loud noise which symbolizes the tumultuous earthquake that accompanied the Lord's death (Matthew 27:46-53) and the shutting of the tomb when He was interred (Matthew 27:59-60). It also foreshadows the breaking open of the tomb at the Resurrection described in Matthew 28:2. The sound is often accomplished by slamming shut a large, heavy book.



The seven words from the Cross

1

Luke 23:34— *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*

Jesus—God in human flesh—died for the sins of the world; my sins, your sins, the sins of those who nailed Him to the cross, the sins of those who mocked Him as He died. In light of this incredible gift of forgiveness we have received, is there somebody in my life whom I need to forgive? Do I need to ask someone to forgive me? For further reflection, see Matthew 6:15, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 and Romans 5:6-11.

Luke 23:39-43 – Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.

2

The thief on the cross acknowledged Jesus as Saviour. Whether I am a convicted criminal or not, I need to be repentant like that thief. As Jesus offers forgiveness, what a comfort it is to know He promises me eternal life. Reflect also on John 14:2.

3

John 19:26-27 - Woman, behold your Son ... Behold your mother.

Jesus asked John to take care of His mother and John agreed. Are there family members who need to be taken care of when I die? How can I make provision for my loved ones? See also 1 Timothy 5:8 and Matthew 6:25-34.

Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 - My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

While God had to forsake the Son because of the sins of the world, I can be certain that He will never forsake me. My cry will be heard by the heavenly Father. Reflect also on Psalm 18:6 and Lamentations 3:55-57.

4

John 19:28 - I thirst.

This physical need shows the humanity of Christ. Jesus could do nothing to quench His thirst. He had to ask. He understands our suffering. Will someone be able to quench my physical thirst? See Hebrews 4:14-16.

5



Luke 23:46 – Father, into your hands I commend My spirit.

I am confident that I can give myself into the loving hands of my heavenly Father. May we all have this confidence at all times to hold fast to the promises God has poured out on us in our Baptism, through His Word, and in the Lord's Supper. As the Apostles' Creed states, "...I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." See Psalm 31:5.

6

John 19:30 - It is finished.

Jesus acknowledges the completion of His mission— atoning for the sins of the world. He died for you and me. When my life nears its end, I can echo the words of the apostle Paul and Peter in 2 Timothy 4:7-8 and 1 Peter 2:20-25.

7

*Be Thou my consolation,
My shield, when I must die;
Remind me of Thy passion
when my last hour draws nigh.
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee,
Upon Thy cross shall dwell.
My heart by faith unfold Thee,
Who dieth thus dies well.*

*O Sacred Head, Now Wounded
LSB #450 stanza 7*

PRAYER: Thank you, Lord, for giving me the words from the cross. I know that my life doesn't end here on this earth. I believe my salvation is through Jesus' blood shed on the cross and that I will live eternally with You in heaven. Praise and thanks be to God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.