

## St. Louis Catholic Church

### Good Friday

There could be no worse death than crucifixion. No penalty was more feared or despised. Many became mentally insane during the process. Soldiers expected people to be filled with bitterness and hatred. Many cursed and blasphemed soldiers and God. It is said that the scourging and beatings were the easiest part.

Death by crucifixion really was death by asphyxiation. Muscles collapsed and lungs were filled with fluid. The suffering was hard to even watch. Yet Jesus carried His own cross to die with you and me in mind. He was innocent and yet He knew that He was the lamb and victim of sacrifice to redeem mankind. Soon we will celebrate that the victim became the victor but today is about the death. Sin of mankind put Him there and we all bear the guilt and should feel the shame. Guilt is an emotion that can destroy self esteem but it can also awaken within ourselves an awareness of the consequences that our sins have on us and others.

Today is certainly a day to mourn and be reflective. It is also a day to think of love. "God so loved the world that He gave us His only Son." The love of God took our sins and offered them on the Cross of Calvary. Anyone who looks upon the Son lifted up and believes in Him will be saved. The cross is a tool of execution but also an instrument of hope and salvation. From the cross we see a victim, violence, hatred and brutality but we also see LOVE. As other victims cursed and blasphemed, Christ too spoke but His words were totally different.

The seven last words spoken by Jesus from the Cross have always been a special spiritual focus on Good Friday. Jesus speaks from the Cross words of HOPE, of strength of FAITH, of FORGIVENESS and of LOVE. Besides being words of power they are words of example on how to follow Christ Crucified.

#### The SEVEN LAST WORDS OF CHRIST

1. The Word of Forgiveness--"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do". Luke 23:34  
Imagine looking down and seeing the very ones who cried out "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" They were ignorant and we can be ignorant of how we affect others. Constantly evaluate and examine our consciences. Have I caused pain to another by my words or actions? Maybe I've been ignorant when I was just "being human or being myself".

2. The Word of Assurance--"Today you will be with Me in paradise". Luke 23:34  
The one man accepted his cross and understood that he was a sinner. Yet he recognized the love of God in Jesus. He cried out to be remembered. Life here is temporary, life in Heaven is eternal. He cried out for mercy and mercy was given. Our destiny is to be with God in paradise. Now is the time to focus on things above rather than things below. We aren't perfect but faith in Jesus can comfort us to hear that we will be with Him in paradise.

3. The Word of Comfort--Woman, behold your son . . . behold your mother. John 19:26-27

Two faithful people. Mary and John the beloved. Stayed there till the end. Christ entrusts us to Mary's care. What a blessing! We have a mother who always points to the Son. We have a mother in Heaven who understands. Her Son's Body is the Church. She loves us. We are given to her and she is given to us. She is a model disciple. We honor her and she looks after us. I find it so helpful, when I'm struggling, to look to Mary like the couple at Cana and say "I'm out of wine". She has helped me, I trust, by telling Jesus my struggles. What a gift!

4. The Word of Desolation--My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me? Mark 15:34  
From Psalm 21. He experienced what we all do when overcome by a pain or a relationship that shatters our life. We feel abandoned. Despair only leads to darkness. Jesus felt it but kept the hope and promise in God's protection. He is a High Priest who does sympathize. Don't give up. Be not afraid. Pray "Though I walk in the valley of the darkness, I fear no evil for you are at my side." Notice the second person pronoun. It is present. The psalmist and we speak to the shepherd.

5. The Word of Suffering--"I thirst". John 19:28  
Human, drained, thirsty, parched and beaten. He feels dry for sure but also He thirsts for souls. He thirsts to complete the cup of salvation.

6. The Word of Triumph--"It is finished". John 19:30  
Three times this expression is found in scripture. After creation, in Revelation at the end of time and on the cross. The Passover Meal is complete. His hour has come. He is now to die to fulfill His mission. He did what the Father sent Him to do. He was consumed by doing the Father's will and not His own.

7. The Word of Committal--"Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit". Luke 23:46  
He met death head on. He freely chose it and trusted that it would lead to more life. Freedom is not just from something. It is also for something. It requires responsibility. There is freedom to change to grow and choose. With freedom we can direct it selfishly, scatter it all over or surrender it to God. Our life is made for God and it will only find rest and peace with God. Our Lord surrendered His life and death to the Father. We are called to do the same. Die to self now and at the end of our earthly existence and trust that that surrender is in God who will raise it.

God Bless,  
Msgr. John McArthur

Key Events This Week:

1. Confessions  
Friday 5:00-6:30 p.m.  
Saturday 2:30-4:30 p.m.
2. Good Friday  
Stations of the Cross--3:00 p.m.  
Passion of Lord--7:00 p.m.
3. Easter Vigil and Mass of Resurrection--Holy Saturday--8:00 p.m.
4. CBC/CBU graduates--please contact the church office with your contact information and any friends who also graduated CBU by emailing [jan.odonnell@stlouis.cdom.org](mailto:jan.odonnell@stlouis.cdom.org) or calling 682-6606.