

Men of Saint Michael

“Iron sharpens iron, as one man sharpens another”

Proverbs 27:17.



Newsletter



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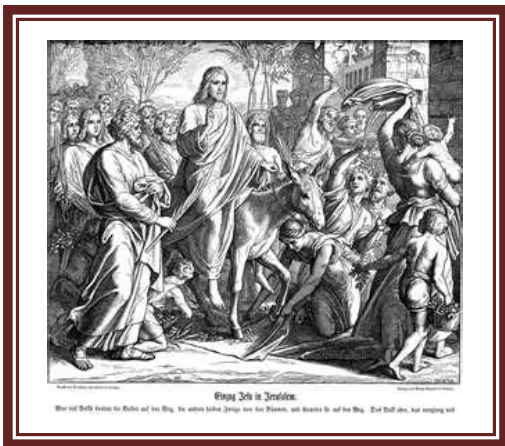
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Holy Week is the week immediately preceding Easter, in which the Passion of Christ is commemorated. The chief ceremonies are: On Sunday, the Blessing of the palms; Tenebrae (literally, darkness) on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings; on Holy Thursday, Mass with the Gloria, and the washing of the feet; on Good Friday, the Passion of St. John, the Adoration of the Cross, and Mass of the Pre-sanctified; and on Holy Saturday, the blessing of the Paschal Candle, Prophecies, Blessing of the font, and Mass with Alleluia. Music is silent from the Gloria on Thursday until the Gloria on Sunday.

Palm Sunday



Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, celebrates our Savior’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when those who believed in His mission waved palms to welcome Him. On this day, palm branches are blessed by the priest and distributed to the worshipers, in accordance with a custom dating back to apostolic times.

The description of the liturgical ceremonies of Holy Week is best introduced with the account of a pilgrim from Gaul in the fourth century: On the Sunday, at the beginning of Holy Week, the usual Sunday morning services were held in the larger church on Golgotha, then called the *Martyrium*, but at the seventh hour of the day (about 1 p.m.) all the people assembled on the Mount of Olives, where was the cave in which the Lord used to teach. There for two hours, hymns and antiphons were sung and lections from the Scriptures were read. At the

ninth hour, they assembled to the summit, whence the Lord ascended to heaven. Here again, hymns were sung, lections suitable to the place and day were read, and prayers were offered up. At the seventh hour, when the gospel

account of Christ's entry into Jerusalem had been read, all rose up, and with branches of palm or olive in their hands, and singing *Benedictus qui venit*, proceeded from the hill down into the city, and continued with their procession until they reached the Church of the Anastasis where vespers were sung, and an *oratio ad crucem* offered up.

Holy Thursday

On Holy Thursday, (Maundy Thursday) the Bishop of each diocese blesses the Holy Oils, used by the priests in administering the Sacraments of Baptism and Anointing of the sick.

Let us follow the pilgrim's description to the end: On Thursday, there was another procession to the Mount of Olives, where the Bishop read the gospel. On Wednesday, the account of the treason of Judas was read as the gospel, and during it, the people wept and lamented. On Maundy Thursday, the psalmody began at the cock-crow. At four p.m., Mass was said in the *Martyrium* by the Bishop, at which the people communicated. Toward seven o'clock in the evening, the people assembled in the Eleona, as the church which then stood on the Mount of Olives was called, and towards eleven o'clock, ascended to the summit of the mount, praying and singing. This lasted until cock-crow the following day. Then, about three a.m., the assembly broke up and a start was made for the Garden of Gethsemane, where they found the beautiful church lit up by two hundred lamps. Here the bishop said a prayer; a suitable psalm followed, and then the reading of the gospel, St Mark 26:41ff, which narrates the capture of Christ in Gethsemane. Then the procession slowly descended the mount into the city and passed on until it reached the place of the crucifixion. Here the gospel narrative of Christ's trial was read: the bishop addressed the people and dismissed them with the exhortation to return about seven o'clock, for the adoration of the Holy Cross. Whereupon, the people proceeded to Mount Sion to pray at the column of the flagellation, and then returned to their homes.

At seven o'clock, the bishop took his seat on his throne in the chapel of the Holy Cross. Before him was placed a table covered with a white lined cloth, round which deacons took up their position. Then the silver shrine containing the wood of the Holy Cross was brought in. It was opened and the Holy Cross itself, along with the inscription (*titulus*) laid upon the table. The faithful and catechumens approached, knelt, kissed the Cross, and touched it with their forehead and eyes, but not with their hands. In this way, they passed by, one by one, while the deacons kept watch. Then the deacons exhibited also to the people Solomon's ring and the horn with which the Jewish kings used to be anointed. These were also kissed.

At the sixth hour, noon, the service proceeded in the following manner. The people assembled in the open court between the chapel of the Holy Cross and the Church of the Anastasis; the bishop took his seat on the throne, and then lections from the Scriptures were read continuously, until the ninth hour. These related to the passion, and were taken from the Old Testament, from the psalms and [prophets, as well as from the New Testament. At the ninth hour, the passage from St. John 19:30, which speaks of the death of Jesus, was read and the assembly was dismissed. The service was then immediately resumed in the chief church (the *Martyrium*) and continued until the reading of the passage (St. John 19:38), describing the descent from the Cross, and then again, a prayer was recited and the blessing of the catechumens took place. With this, the service for the day concluded and the people were dismissed. The younger clerics, however, remained throughout the night watching in the church.

With regard to the liturgy for Good Friday, the pilgrim found that the ceremonies she saw in Jerusalem differed not at all from what she was familiar with in her own country. She only observes that the baptized children were conducted by the bishop first to the Church of the Resurrection and then to the principle church (the *Martyrium*).

This is the earliest complete description of the ceremonies of Holy Week, which we possess.



Holy Oils

Good Friday



The day of our Lord's Passion is universally regarded as a day of mourning. Good Friday sees the Cross, which has been covered from Passion Sunday on, unveiled with fitting ceremony. The priest and the people venerate the Cross. The Mass on Good Friday is called the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified, because the consecration of the host has taken place on the preceding day.

The Reproaches and the Reading of the Passion

The Reproaches (Improperia), are often chanted by a priest during the Good Friday service as the people are venerating the Cross. In this haunting and poignant poem-like chant of very ancient origin, Christ himself 'reproaches' us, making us more deeply aware of how our sinfulness and hardness of heart caused such agony for our sinless and loving Savior. A modern translation of the some of the Reproaches, originally in Latin follows:

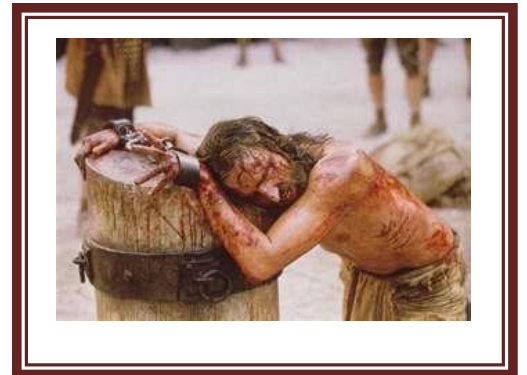
My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me!
I led you out of Egypt; but you led your Savior to the Cross.
For forty years, I led you safely through the desert,
I fed you with manna from heaven,
and brought you to the land of plenty; But you led your Savior to the Cross.
O, My people! What have I done to you that you should testify against Me?

Holy God, Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us.

Three times during Holy Week the Passion is read - on Passion Sunday, Holy Thursday, and Good Friday. By very ancient tradition, three clergy read the three principal parts from the sanctuary: Jesus (always read by a priest), Narrator, and all the other individual parts. The people also have a role in this - we are those who condemn the Lord to death. Hearing our own voices say 'Away with Him! Crucify him!' heightens our consciousness of our complicity by our personal sinfulness in causing His death.

Scourging at the Pillar

When Jesus fell down at the foot of the pillar, after the flagellation, I saw Claudia Procles, the wife of Pilate, send some large pieces of linen to the Mother of God. I know not whether she thought that Jesus would be set free, and that his Mother would then require linen to dress his wounds, or whether this compassionate lady was aware of the use which would be made of her present. At the termination of the scourging, Mary came to herself for a time, and saw her Divine Son all torn and mangled, being led away by the archers after the scourging: he wiped his eyes, which were filled with blood, that he might look at his Mother, and she stretched out her hands towards him, and continued to look at the bloody traces of his footsteps. I soon after saw Mary and Magdalen approach the pillar where Jesus had been scourged; the mob were at a distance, and they were partly concealed by the other holy women, and by a few kind-hearted persons who had joined them; they knelt down on the ground near the pillar and wiped up the sacred blood with the linen which Claudia Procles had sent. John was not at that time with the holy women, who were about twenty in number. The



sons of Simeon and of Obed, and Veronica, as also the two nephews of Joseph of Arimathea—Aram and Themni—were in the Temple and appeared to be overwhelmed with grief. It was not more than nine o'clock A.M. when the scourging terminated.” — From the writings of Anne Catherine Emmerich on the Dolorous Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He Really Rose

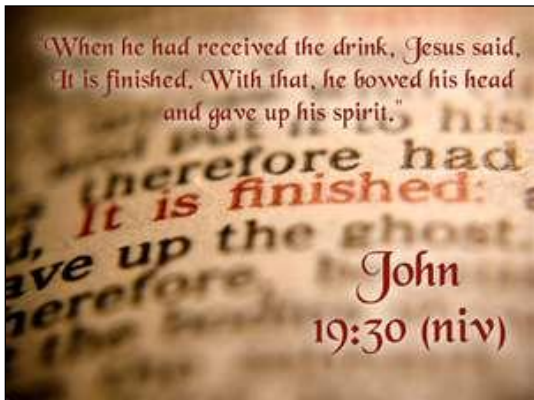
There is an old Persian legend which says that the earth was created a great barren plain, without tree or plant. The Creator sent an angel to scatter broadcast the choicest seeds on every spot. Satan, seeing the seeds on the ground, determined to destroy the work of God. He and his helpers buried all the seeds in the soil, and then summoned the sun and the showers to make them rot away. Satan sneered with triumph at the trick he had pulled, but not for long. In a few days the buried seeds began to germinate and grow beneath the ground. Soon they pushed their shoots above the soil. All the earth sprang up with plants and flowers. The Creator had turned the cunning of the evil one to good account.

That same Satan thought he would destroy the work of redemption by burying the Son of God beneath the ground. However, the power that was God's sprang up from the grave and the crucified Christ came forth on Easter- glorious and victorious. This fact is the foundation of our faith. As St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

"If Christ has not risen, vain then is your preaching, vain too is your faith." 1 Cor. 15:14.

If Jesus did not really rise by His own power from the tomb, then He is not God and the religion He established is not the religion of God. However, we know, with a certainty greater than that of any other fact in history, that Christ really rose from the grave. To prove this, we must be sure first of all that Christ really died and really was buried.

Christ Truly Died



The Gospels give every evidence that Jesus really died. The disciples of Christ, the Roman officer, the soldiers, and even the Jews testify to His death. Besides, it would have been impossible for the Savior not to have died. No rest and refreshment for hours before His sufferings, sufferings that would kill the strongest man, the agony in the garden, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the carrying of the cross. In fact, the Jews were afraid that Christ might die before they got Him to Calvary, so they had Simon of Cyrene help our Lord. Our Lord Himself said, "It is finished." And then a soldier pierced His side with a lance.

It is ridiculous even to suggest that Christ did not really die, yet that is one of the scores of statements made to disprove the resurrection.

Christ was Truly Buried

The evangelists and St. Paul tell us clearly that Christ was placed in a tomb. They describe how He was wrapped in linens, how a huge rock was placed before the entrance, how soldiers were assigned to watch day and night. Certainly, the enemies of Christ would make sure He was dead, after they had gone to all the trouble of condemning Him to death.

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, also called the Church of the Resurrection by Eastern Christians, is a church within the walled Old City of Jerusalem. It is a few steps away from the



Muristan. The site is venerated as Golgotha, (the Hill of Calvary), where Jesus was crucified, and is said to also contain the place where Jesus was buried (the sepulcher). The church has been an important Christian pilgrimage destination since at least the 4th century, as the purported site of the resurrection of Jesus.

Holy Saturday

This too is a day of mourning. However, the sadness of the day is already modified by the approach of the Resurrection and the Alleluia is once again sung at Mass.

The water blessed on Holy Saturday is called Easter Water. Some of it is set aside for distribution to the faithful for use in their homes. It is not a substitute for Holy Water, which is intended for use at all times.

Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018



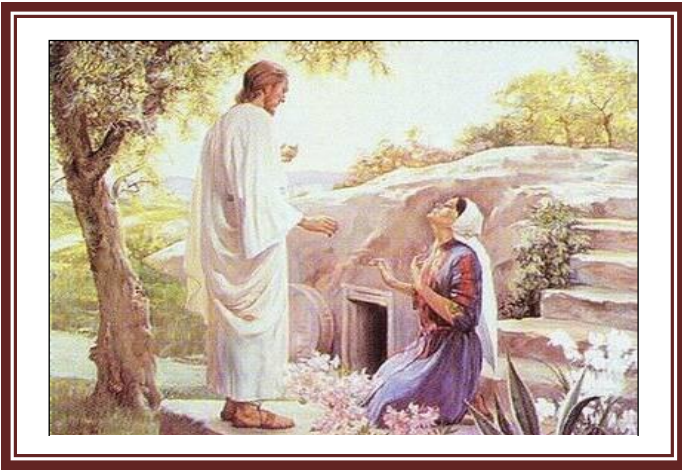
Easter is the principal feast of the ecclesiastical year, the first and oldest of all festivals. Easter is the basis on which the Church's year is built, the connecting link with the festivals of the Old Covenant, and the central point which depends the date of other movable feasts. At an early date, the Fathers mention Easter as the most important of the festivals. For example, Pope Saint Leo the Great (ca. 400 – November 10, 461) in his *Sermo 47 in Exodus*, says that the Incarnation and birth of the Son of God (Christmas) served as a prelude to the mystery of the Resurrection and that Christ had no other purpose in being born of a woman than that he should be nailed to the Cross for us. It is the center of the greater part of the ecclesiastical year. Other Fathers and the Roman martyrology call it the greatest feast (*festum festorum*).

The English word "Easter" comes from Eastre, in German "Ostra," the goddess of spring, worshipped by ancient Saxons and Angles. Fires in honor of the goddess were kindled in the spring.

Feast days are for the most part fixed. Other feasts, because of the fact that they have some connection with a celebration of the Old Law, are dependent upon that celebration. Easter is a prime example. The arrangement of this feast has its origin in the feast of the Pasch or Passover in the Old Law. The passing of the Hebrews out of the land of Egypt recalls the story of the Angel who made this possible, on the night when first the moon was at the full, following the vernal equinox, March 21. The Pasch was always celebrated by the Jews in this same way to commemorate this fact. Jesus celebrated this feast with His Apostles the night before He died. He rose from the dead on the following Sunday. Hence, Easter Sunday follows the first full moon after March 21. The forty days of Lent and the three Sundays preceding Lent date back in this same arrangement.

Christ Truly Rose

Yes, we believe it, but we have all the evidence to prove our belief. Read the letters of St. Paul. He shows clearly that this resurrection of Christ, a type of our own resurrection on the last day, was real and bodily, just as much as His death and burial. Especially clear and convincing is St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, where we read:



"For I delivered to you first of all, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and after that to the Eleven. Then he was seen by more than five hundred brethren at one time, many of whom are with us still, but some have fallen asleep. After that he was seen by James, then by all the apostles. And last of all, as by one born out of due time, he was seen by me" (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

risen Redeemer, when they knew this claim would bring them persecution and death. In very fact, the apostles, with one exception, gave their lives for this belief. Men do not die for a lie. Nor do they die for something uncertain, something of which they were not sure.

The Gospels are no less clear: they tell us that the tomb was empty, that the stone was rolled away, and that the soldiers were paid to say that the apostles had stolen Christ's body.

Further proof is given in the eleven appearances of Christ to different individuals and groups: to Mary Magdalene, to the pious women, to St. Peter, to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, to all the apostles except St. Thomas, to all of them with Thomas, to five apostles and two disciples at Tiberias, to eleven apostles in Galilee, to five hundred brethren together, to James, and to the eleven apostles in Jerusalem. Jesus not only appeared, He talked and ate to show that He was risen bodily.

With all this evidence, can we doubt the truth and sincerity of the faith we profess? The whole account convinces us that Jesus Christ was everything He claimed to be, that He is the promised One, that He taught and founded a religion.

Today we glory in that truth, the incontestable fact that Christ rose from the grave. These proofs are given in the hope of bolstering our faith, if it needs support. We give these proofs to answer the many false statements about the resurrection.

He is risen, we sing with the angels today. He is risen, we murmur in our hearts. He is risen, that is the conviction of our minds. Yes, it is the theme song of our faith. It is the fact that makes Easter truly happy. May the fact of the resurrection bring you joy.

Golgotha

One of the mountains upon which the Old City of Jerusalem is built was called Golgotha, which means "the Skull." On top of this mountain stands the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The name Golgotha has entered the Christian tradition as "Golgotha," and the site has become sacred. The word was translated into Latin and is now known as Calvary.



Why was the mountain called Golgotha—the Skull? According to an ancient legend, cited by early Christian sources as a Jewish tradition, the skull of Adam, the first man, lies hidden in this mountain. It is also told that Shem, son of Noah the righteous, hid this skull here after he left the ark, at the end of the flood on the earth.

Christian lore relates that when Jesus was crucified on Mount



Golgotha, a drop of his blood fell to the earth, touched the skull of Adam and revived in it a breath of life for a fleeting moment.

Occasionally, the symbol of the skull and bones is featured in some depictions of the crucifix. 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45: "And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive...The first man Adam was made into a living soul; the last Adam into a quickening spirit."

The Death of Adam

The death of Adam, according to the Golden Legend, compiled by Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa: "And in the end of his life when he should die, it is said, but of none authority, that he sent Seth his son into Paradise for to fetch the oil of mercy, where he received certain grains of the fruit of the tree of mercy by an angel. And when he came again he found his father Adam yet alive and told him what he had done. And then Adam laughed first and then died. And then he laid the grains or kernels under his father's tongue and buried him in the vale of Hebron; and out of his mouth grew three trees of the three grains, of which trees the cross that our Lord suffered his passion on was made, by virtue of which he gat very mercy, and was brought out of darkness into very light of heaven. To the which, he brings us that liveth and reigneth God, world without end."

Beneath the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher on Mount Golgotha lies the Chapel of Adam

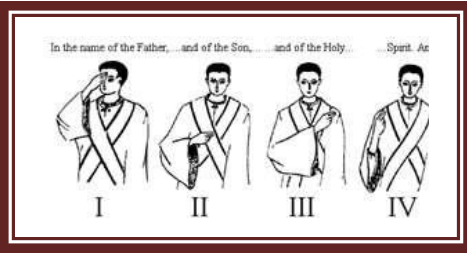


The chapel of Adam beneath Calvary. An ancient tradition places the burial of the first man here. Thus, Christ's blood, dripping through a fissure caused by the earthquake at the moment of our Lord's death, would have poured on Adam's skull.

The Sign of the Cross

Nicephorus writes that St. John the Evangelist blessed himself with the sign of the cross before dying. St. Paul used this same sign to restore sight to a blind man. Many even affirm that Our Lord Himself taught this sign to the apostles and that he used it to bless them on the day of his Ascension. "The sign of the cross," says St. Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of St. John, "is the trophy raised against the power of the prince of this world; when he sees it, he is afraid; when he even hears of it, he is filled with terror." Tertullian in the second century says, "At every fresh step and change of place, whenever we come in or go out...we impress upon our forehead the sign of the Cross."

Our Lord's death sanctified (made holy) the symbol of the cross. The cross went from being regarded as an instrument of shame, to the symbol of Jesus' triumph and victory over sin and death and a sign of our faith in Him. That is why we make the sign of the cross.



If done with reverence and thought, the sign of the cross is a protection from the powers of Satan and a reminder of the power of our Faith. "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, proclaims for all to see, our belief in the Trinity and the Unity of God in three persons. The touching of the forehead is to show that the Son proceeds from the Father, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son is signified by touching the heart and the two shoulders; while the form of the cross reminds us of our redemption by Jesus' sacrifice the cross. Make the

sign of the cross devoutly. It is one of the greatest sacramentals of the Church.

The cross is signed upon the forehead, lips and heart when the Gospel is read, to show that we must avoid sin in thought, word or deed, and professes our faith in these three ways.

The Feast of Exaltation

In the seventh century, the Church in Rome adopted the practice of Adoration of the Cross from the Church in Jerusalem, where a fragment of wood believed to be the Lord's cross had been venerated every year on Good Friday since the fourth century.

The actual Cross on which Christ was crucified was found by St. Helena, the mother of Constantine. Many pieces of it exist today and are venerated as relics with special honor.

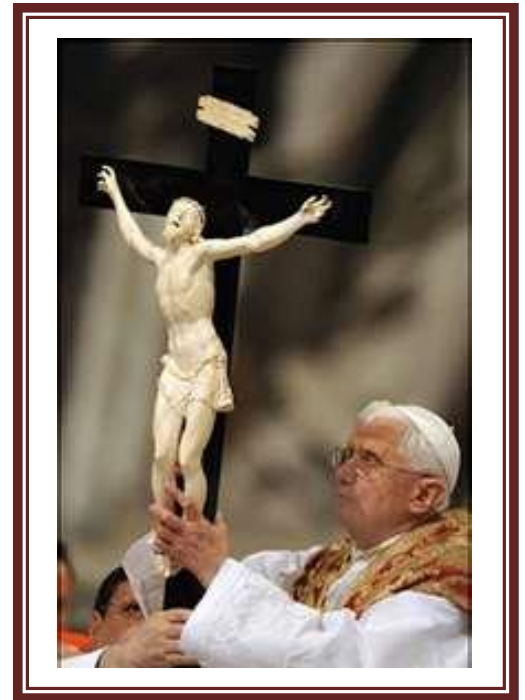
In the Christian liturgical calendar, there are several different Feasts of the Cross, all of which commemorate the cross used in the crucifixion of Jesus. While Good Friday is dedicated to the Passion of Christ and the Crucifixion, these days celebrate the cross itself, as the instrument of salvation. In the Latin Rite, the feast of the Triumph of the Cross (Exaltation) is celebrated on September 14.

This feast is called in Greek "Υψωσις τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ" ("Raising Aloft of the Precious Cross"). In Latin it is called Exaltatio Sanctae Crucis ("Raising Aloft of the Holy Cross"). (The word "Exaltatio" is sometimes translated as "Exaltation", at other times, as in the 1973 ICEL translation, as "Triumph".)

According to legends that spread widely throughout Western Europe, the True Cross was discovered in 326 by Saint Helena, the mother of the Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great, during a pilgrimage she made to Jerusalem. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was then built at the site of the discovery, by order of Helena and Constantine. The church was dedicated nine years later, with a portion of the cross placed inside it. One-third of the Cross remained in Jerusalem, one-third was brought to Rome and deposited in the Sessorian basilica Santa Croce in Gerusalemme (Holy Cross in Jerusalem), and one-third was taken back to Constantinople.

Other legends explain that in 614, that portion of the cross was carried away from the church by the Persians and remained missing until it was recaptured by the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius in 628. Initially taken to Constantinople, the cross was returned to the church the following year.

The date of the feast marks the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in 335. This was a two-day festival: although the actual consecration of the church was on September 13, the cross itself was brought outside the church on September 14 so that the clergy and faithful could pray before the True Cross, and all could come forward to venerate it.



CATHOLIC DOCTRINE on the VENERATION of the CROSS

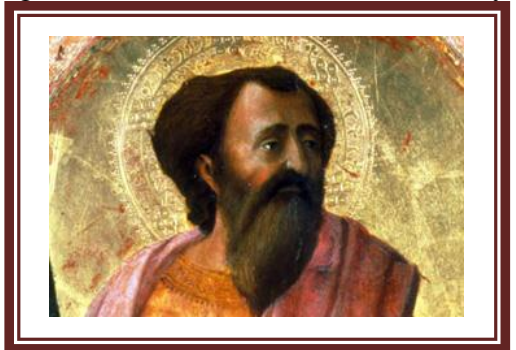
The True Cross holds the highest place in dignity among all relics. While it is of faith that this cult is useful, lawful, even pious and worthy of praise and of encouragement, and while we are not permitted to speak against it as something pernicious, still it is one of those devotional practices which the church can encourage, or restrain, or stop, according to circumstances.

This explains how the veneration of images was forbidden to the Jews by that text of Exodus (20:4), which has been so grossly abused by Iconoclasts and Protestants: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God" etc. It also explains the fact that in the first ages of Christianity, when converts from paganism were so numerous, and the impression of idol-worship was so fresh, the Church found it advisable not to permit the development of this cult of images; but later, when that danger had disappeared, when Christian traditions and Christian instinct had gained strength, the cult developed more freely.

It should be noted, that the cult of images and relics is not that of *latria*, which is the adoration due to God alone, but is, as the Second Council of Nicea teaches, a relative veneration paid to the image or relic and referring to that which it represents. Precisely this same doctrine is repeated in Sess. XXV of the Council of Trent: "Images are not to be worshipped because it is believed that some divinity or power resides in them and that they must be worshipped on that account, or because we ought to ask anything of them, or because we should put our trust in them, as was done by the gentiles of old who placed their hope in idols but because the honor which is shown to them is referred to the prototypes which they represent; so that through the images which we kiss, and before which we kneel, we may adore Christ, and venerate the saints, whose resemblances they bear."

The True Cross of Christ

The Cross to which Christ had been nailed, and on which He had died, became for Christians, quite naturally and logically, the object of a special respect and worship. St. Paul says, in 1 Cor. 1:17: "For Christ sent me not to baptize; but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of speech, lest the cross of Christ should be made void"; in Gal., 2:19: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross"; in Eph., 2:16: Christ . . . "might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross"; in Phil., 3:18: "For many walk . . . enemies of the cross of Christ"; in Col., 2:14: "Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross"; and in Gal., 6:14: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world".



Reliquary of the True Cross at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem.

It seems clear, therefore, that for St. Paul the Cross of Christ was not only a precious remembrance of Christ's sufferings and death, but also a symbol closely associated with His sacrifice and the mystery of the Passion. It was, moreover, natural that it should be venerated and become an object of a cult with the Christians who had been saved by it. Of such a cult in the Primitive Church we have definite and sufficiently numerous evidences. Tertullian meets the objection that Christians adore the cross by answering with *argumentum ad hominem*, not by a denial. Another apologist, Minucius Felix, replies to the same objection. Lastly, we may recall the famous caricature of Alexamenos, for which see the article *Ass.* From all this it appears

that the pagans, without further consideration of the matter, believed that the Christians adored the cross; and that the apologists either answered indirectly, or contented themselves with saying that they do not adore the cross, without denying that a certain form of veneration was paid to it.

This cult became more extensive than ever after the discovery of the Holy Places and of the True Cross. Since the time when Jerusalem had been laid waste and ruined in the wars of the Romans, especially since Hadrian had founded upon the ruins his colony of Ælia Capitolina, the places consecrated by the Passion, Death, and Burial of Christ had been profaned and, it would seem, deserted. Under Constantine, after peace had been guaranteed to the Church, Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem, caused excavations to be made (about A.D. 327, it is believed) in order to ascertain the location of these holy sites. That of Calvary was identified, as well as that of the Holy Sepulcher; it was in the course of these excavations that the wood of the Cross was recovered. It was recognized as authentic, and for it was built a chapel or oratory, which is mentioned by Eusebius, also by St. Cyril of Jerusalem, and Silvia (Etheria). From A.D. 347, that is to say, twenty years after these excavations, the same St. Cyril, in his discourses (or *catecheses*) delivered in these very places (iv, 10; x, 14; xiii, 4) speaks of this sacred wood. An inscription of A.D. 359, found at Tixter, in the neighborhood of Sétif in Mauretania, mentions in an enumeration of relics, a fragment of the True Cross (*Roman Miscellanies*, X, 441).



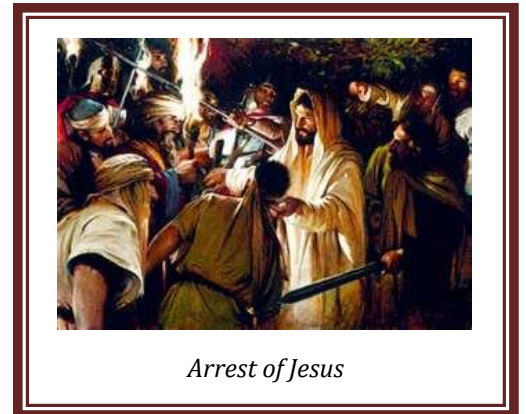
The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Saint Matthew



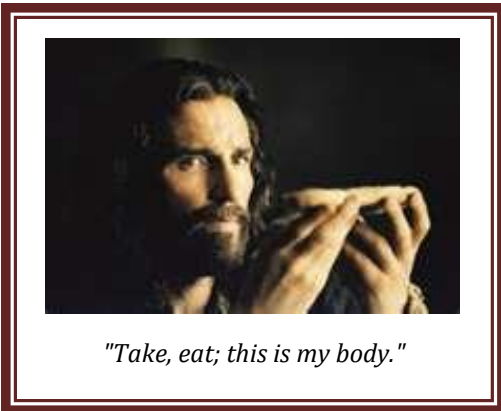
Jesus said to his disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of man will be delivered up to be crucified." Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and took counsel together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be a tumult among the people." Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head, as he sat at table. But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor." But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." Then one of the twelve,

who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him. Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain one, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. When it was evening, he sat at table with the twelve disciples; and as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." And they were very sorrowful, and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me, will betray me. The Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Is it I, Master?"

He said to him, "You have said so." Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter declared to him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." Jesus said to him, "Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you." And so said all the disciples. Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go yonder and pray." And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and



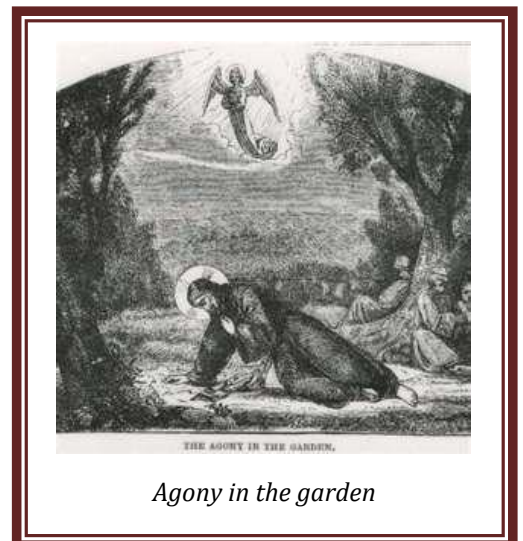
Arrest of Jesus



"Take, eat; this is my body."

troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done." And again, he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still

sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand." While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I shall kiss is the man; seize him." And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Hail, Master!" And he kissed him. Jesus said to him, "Friend, why are you here?" Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But all this has taken place, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook him and fled. Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter followed him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.'"



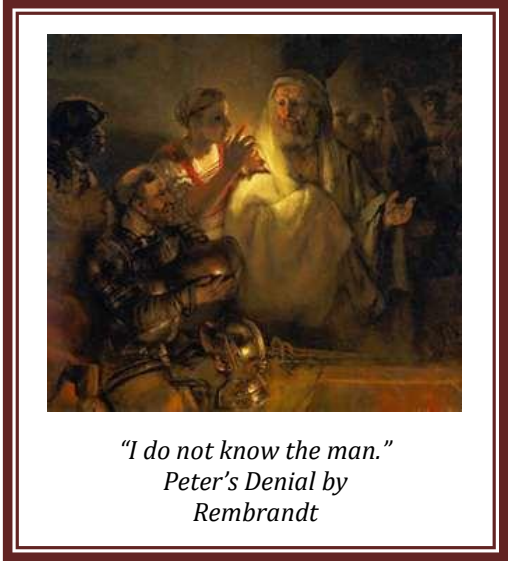
Agony in the garden

And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." Then they spat in his face, and struck him; and some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?" Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a maid came up to him, and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean." And when he went out to the porch, another maid saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again, he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man." After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you." Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter



"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?"

remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death; and they bound him and led him away and delivered him to Pilate the governor. When Judas, his betrayer, saw that he was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." And throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money." So, they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Therefore, that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me." Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so." But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?" But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge;

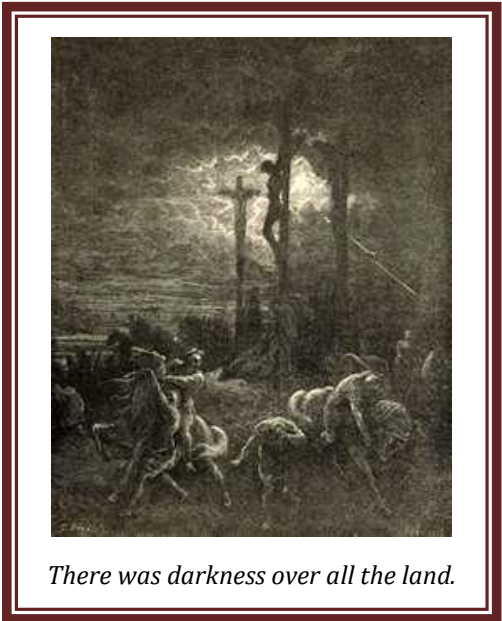


*"I do not know the man."
Peter's Denial by
Rembrandt*

so that the governor wondered greatly. Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much over him today in a dream." Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified." And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified." So, when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he

took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this righteous man's blood; see to it yourselves." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus

into the praetorium, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe upon him and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spat upon him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, and put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him. As they went out, they came upon a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; this man they compelled to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull), they offered him wine to drink, mingled with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." So also, the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabach-thani?" that is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "This man is calling Elijah." And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" There were also many women there, looking on from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him; among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. When it was evening,



There was darkness over all the land.

there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and departed. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulcher. Next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore, order the sepulcher to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." So, they went and made the sepulcher secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard. Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapters 26 & 27 RSVCE



"Truly this was the Son of God!"

The Seven Last Words of Christ From the Cross

We often speak of the “Seven Last Words” of Jesus on the cross. All four gospels mention them. Three are unique to Luke; three more are unique to John; there is only the one in Matthew and Mark, “last words” in the usual sense of the term. It is the most troubling of all, an expression of despair: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Below, we examine each of our Lord’s final statements.

1. Jesus addresses the Father.

Then Jesus said, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*" [Luke 23:34]

This first saying of Christ on the cross is traditionally called "The Word of Forgiveness". It is theologically understood as Christ’s prayer for forgiveness for those who were crucifying him: The Roman soldiers and all others involved in his torture and death. By virtue of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection, forgiveness is possible, the gates of Heaven are opened, and sin is forever conquered.

2. Jesus speaks to Dismas.

And he said to him, "*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.*" [Luke 23:43]

This saying is called "The Word of Salvation." In Luke's Gospel, Christ was crucified between two thieves (Dismas, the good criminal, and Gestas), Dismas supports Jesus' innocence and asks him to remember him when he comes into his kingdom. Jesus replies, "Truly, I say to you..."

The punctuation of Christ’s reply has been the subject of doctrinal differences among Christians. Protestant Christians typically read this as, "today you will be with me in Paradise". This understanding presumes direct passage to Heaven. Catholics, however, interpret it as, "I say to you today," leaving open the possibility that the statement was made presently, but eternal beatitude would be experienced later.

3. Jesus entrusts his mother to the beloved disciple.

Jesus saw his own mother, and the disciple standing near whom he loved, he said to his mother, "*Woman, behold your son.*" Then he said to the disciple, "*Behold your mother.*" And from that hour, he took his mother into his family. [John 19:26-27]

This statement is called "The Word of Relationship." Jesus entrusts his mother to the care of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," the Apostle John. Even in the depths of his misery, Christ cared not for himself but for the well-being of Mary.

4. Jesus cries out to the Father.

Around the ninth hour, Jesus shouted in a loud voice, saying "*Eli Eli lama sabachthani?*" which is, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" [Matthew 27:46]

And at the ninth hour, Jesus shouted in a loud voice, "Eloi Eloi lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" [Mark 15:34]

Of the last seven sayings of Christ, it is the only one that appears in two Gospels. It is a quote from King David in Psalm 22. Some see it as an abandonment of the Son by the Father. Others understand Christ’s cry as that of

one who was truly human and felt forsaken. Tortured to death by his foes, deserted by his friends, Jesus may have felt deserted by God.

5. Jesus is thirsty.

He said, "*I thirst.*" [John 19:28]

This is called "The Word of Distress" and is contrasted with Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan Woman at the Well in John.

The Gospel of John says Jesus was offered a drink of sour wine. A sponge dipped in wine on a hyssop branch was held it to Jesus' lips. Hyssop branches figured significantly in the Old Testament and in the Book of Hebrews.

This statement of Jesus fulfills the prophecy given in Psalm 9:21(cf. Psalm 22:15), thus the quotation from John's Gospel "to fulfill the scriptures."

6. "It is finished."

Jesus said, "*Tetelestai*", meaning "*It is finished.*" [John 19:30]

This statement is called "The Word of Triumph," and is interpreted by some as the announcement of the end of Jesus' earthly life in anticipation of his Resurrection.

Under this interpretation, these words are a cry of victory, not resignation. Jesus had completed his divine mission. Salvation was now possible. Christ had assumed our brokenness and taken our place. He had offered himself fully to God as a sacrifice on behalf of humanity.

Jesus refused the initial drink of vinegar, gall and myrrh (Matthew 27:34 and Mark 15:23) offered to alleviate his suffering. But here, several hours later, we see Jesus fulfilling the messianic prophecy found in Psalm 69:21.

Catholic theologian Dr. Scott Hahn offers this interpretation:

"They put a sponge full of the sour wine on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said the words that are spoken of in the fourth cup consummation, "It is finished." What is the 'it' referring to? That grammatical question began really bothering me at some point. I asked several people and their response was usually, "Well, it means the work of redemption that Christ was working on." All right, that's true, I agree it does refer to that, but in context. An exegete, a trained interpreter of the word is supposed to find the contextual meaning, not just import a meaning from a theology textbook. What is Jesus speaking of when he says, "It is finished?" I mean, our redemption is not completed once he - he's not yet raised. Paul says, "He was raised for our justification."

So, what is the 'it' talking about? He said, 'It is finished', and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit, his breath. The 'it,' of course you realize by now, is the Passover sacrifice. Because who is Jesus Christ? He is the sacrifice of Egypt, the firstborn son. Remember, the Egyptians involuntarily had to offer up their firstborn sons as atonement for their own sins and wickedness. Christ dies for Egypt and the world. Plus, he is the Passover lamb, the unblemished lamb, without broken bones who offers himself up for the life of the world. This fits with John's gospel, because as soon as Jesus was introduced in chapter 1 of the fourth gospel by John the Baptist, what did John say? He said, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." And here is the lamb, headed for the altar of the cross, dying as a righteous firstborn and as an unblemished lamb. I believe that it's best to say in light of scripture that the sacrifice of Christ did not begin with the first spike. It didn't begin when the cross was sunk into the ground. It began in the upper room.

7. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

And speaking in a loud voice, Jesus said, "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.*" [Luke 23:46]

From Psalm 31:5, this saying is an announcement, not a request. It's traditionally called "The Word of Reunion" and is understood as the proclamation of Jesus returning to the Father in Heaven.

In this final utterance, we see Christ's complete trust in the Father. Jesus encountered death in the same way he lived his life, offering up his earthly existence as a perfect sacrifice and placing himself completely in God's hands.

