SEPTEM VERBA CHRISTI IN CRUCE

The Seven Last Words

During His three hours upon the Cross, Our Lord spoke seven times. Gathered from the four Gospels, these sayings are His last testament: a pulpit from which He taught forgiveness, mercy, filial love, abandonment, zeal for souls, fidelity and perfect surrender.



Diego Velázquez, Christ Crucified, c. 1632 · Museo del Prado, Madrid

THE THREE HOURS' AGONY

The devotion of the *Tre Ore*, begun by the Jesuit Fr. Alonso Messia in Lima, Peru, in the 17th century, spends noon to three o'clock on Good Friday in meditation on these seven words — the hours when darkness covered the earth.

I — *Pater, dimitte illis: non enim sciunt quid faciunt.*

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

FORGIVENESS · Luke 23:34 — He prays for His executioners as the nails are driven.

II — *Amen dico tibi: hodie mecum eris in paradiso.*

"Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

MERCY · Luke 23:43 — to the penitent thief, St. Dismas.

III — *Mulier, ecce filius tuus. … Ecce mater tua.*

"Woman, behold thy son. … Behold thy mother."

FILIAL LOVE · John 19:26–27 — Mary given to St. John, and in him to us all.

IV — *Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani?*

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

DESOLATION · Matthew 27:46 — the opening of Psalm 21, which ends in triumph.

V — *Sitio.*

"I thirst."

ZEAL FOR SOULS · John 19:28 — a bodily thirst, and a thirst for the salvation of souls.

VI — *Consummatum est.*

"It is consummated."

FIDELITY · John 19:30 — the work of Redemption is accomplished; the prophecies are fulfilled.

VII — *Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.*

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

SURRENDER · Luke 23:46 — and bowing His head, He gave up the ghost.