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— THE —  
**SEVEN**  
*last*  
**WORDS**

REFLECTIONS BY  
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EWTN CHAPLAIN

# THE SEVEN LAST WORDS

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## THE SEVEN LAST WORDS

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Dear Family,

As we enter the holy season of Lent, I want to help you grow in your love for Christ, the one who was “pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity,” the one who “bore the punishment that makes us whole,” and the one whose wounds have healed us (Isaiah 53:5).

As Jesus was on the Cross, He spoke seven phrases, “the Seven Last Words,” that are now recorded in Scripture. Through this booklet, I will guide you through the meditations on these final words before His death.

Together, as we meditate and pray to Our Lord during His Passion, we will encounter Jesus’ suffering personally and come to understand how to spiritually prepare our souls to be in Christ’s presence upon our own trials and physical death.

This booklet is designed to help you grow closer to Jesus, the Suffering Servant, as we meditate on His final words from the Cross and to help us prepare for our eternal journey.

Thank you for keeping watch with Our Savior, Jesus Christ. Let His words speak directly to you, and let Him transform you.

Peace and blessings to you in Christ,



Fr. Joseph Mary Wolfe, MFVA

**Please visit [ewtn.com/sevenlastwords](http://ewtn.com/sevenlastwords) to sign up for the accompanying EWTN Learn video series.**



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# Father, Forgive Them

We learn to forgive by looking at Jesus on the Cross. As Jesus hung in agony, He looked at the men who had crucified Him, and He looked at them with love. He cried to His heavenly Father and begged not for revenge or even justice, but mercy.

As we contemplate these words of Jesus, something of His power to forgive is imparted to us. **“Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.”** We cannot do it by ourselves, but as we contemplate our Lord on the Cross, we can ask for the grace to forgive so that we are able to say, “Father, forgive them for what they have done.”

When we forgive, however, it does not mean that we are necessarily going to feel forgiveness. Our emotions are what they are. We cannot always control the feelings that rise up in us, and sometimes the hurt just gets brought up again – but we can choose the way of Jesus. We can choose to forgive. Forgiveness really is a choice. I choose to forgive. I choose to pray for that very person who hurt me. I choose to treat them with charity and to ask the Lord to help them with the graces they need. That’s what Jesus did.



# With Me in Paradise

The second word of Our Lord from the Cross is, **“Today you will be with me in Paradise.”** Here we see His work of redemption already begun, even as He is hanging on the Cross. A man who is a thief, and perhaps a murderer, is forgiven. And why is he forgiven? The thief said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42).

Ultimately, our salvation is not something we achieve. It is looking to Jesus and saying to Jesus, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom. Save me because I have sinned against You.” We hope to one day hear Him say, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” That’s the good news. That our Savior, who died for love of us, so that one day you and I can be in Paradise because of what He has achieved.

Until that time, Jesus is with us every single day in the Eucharist. That is the great treasure that you and I have. As St. Thomas Aquinas wrote in a beautiful hymn, “O Sacred Banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of His Passion is renewed, the mind is filled with grace, and the pledge of future glory is given.”



# Behold, Your Mother

Jesus says, **“Woman, behold, your son. ... Behold, your mother.”** He first entrusts us to Mary (Behold, your son), and then He asks us to look at her (Behold, your mother). Think about the fact that the words Jesus spoke from the Cross were not just for that particular moment in time. When Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do,” that was not just for those who had put Him on the Cross. That was for all of us, all mankind, for all of human history. Similarly, when He says, “Behold, your son,” to Our Lady, He’s entrusting us in a very special way to her and her intercession.

And when He says to us, “Behold, your mother,” this is one of the great gifts that He gives us as He is hanging on the Cross: the gift of His own mother, so that she may assist us. Jesus asks us to look to Mary to learn from her – and to follow her example. We are invited to unite our own joys and sorrows to the joys and sorrows of Mary and, with her, to say “Fiat,” “Yes,” to the will of God in the present moment. What sorrows can we say “fiat” with Mary to God for today?



# Why Have You Forsaken Me?

When Jesus spoke the fourth word, **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”** He was referring to Psalm 22. At that time, there was no numbering of chapters and verses. People referred to a Psalm by reciting the first line. The first line of Psalm 22 is “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” Jesus was saying that this Psalm was now fulfilled in Him, because that Psalm also says,

They have pierced my hands and my feet

I can count all my bones.

They stare at me and gloat;

they divide my garments among them;

for my clothing they cast lots. (Psalm 22:18-19)

But that Psalm also speaks of profound trust. It says our fathers trusted in God, who delivered them. They trusted and they were not disappointed. Everything in Psalm 22 looks forward to Christ’s coming.

Christ’s words are not a cry of despair, but rather they are saying that, in Him, everything has been fulfilled. His Passion points to the fact that He is the Son of God. But we also remember that death was not the end of His story. No, we have the glory of the Resurrection. Yes, we may have to go through our own passion, our own suffering, our own difficulties in this life. But when we get to that end, it will all have been worth it because the end of our story can be the glory of Heaven with Jesus.





# I Thirst

Mother Teresa wrote a letter to all the members of her communities during Holy Week in 1993. She wrote that Jesus thirsts for you. He longs for you. He misses you. And yet how often we do not think of Him. Do you ever think about that? How much the Lord longs for you, waits for you, loves you? He desires a deep communion with you, and He is inviting you to a life with Him.

We still see this longing of Jesus for us today in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, He remains with us and unites Himself to us through all days. Mother Teresa said, "When you look at a crucifix, you know how much He loved you then. When you look at the Eucharist, you know how much He loves you now, today."

That's what the Mass is. It puts us into contact with the Lord and all that He accomplished on Calvary when He said those seven last words. Through the Mass, Jesus speaks to us through His Word, and then He gives us His very Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. Why? Because He thirsts. **He thirsts for you.**



# It Is Accomplished

The end of Mother Angelica's (1923-2016) life was a hidden, quiet, prayerful life of suffering. Again and again, she would say, "Thy will be done."

Where did she learn to do all of that? From Jesus Himself. He came to do the Father's will, "to do the will of the one who sent me" (John 4:34). That was His food. And He set His face toward Jerusalem because He knew that He was called to offer His life, to manifest the greatest love of God there on the Cross. His sixth word: **"It is accomplished"** or "It is finished." He did what the Father had given Him to do.

And we will have the greatest satisfaction if we strive to live in God's will today. If we seek to accomplish God's will and work for us on this earth, we will have the great consolation to say at the end of our lives what Jesus said (if not with our words, then in our hearts): "It is accomplished." And the more obstacles and trials we underwent in order to fulfill His plans and purposes, the greater the satisfaction and, indeed, the more intense our love will have become. "It is accomplished."



# I Commend My Spirit

Jesus' last words on the Cross were, **"Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit."** Now, Our Lord was not commending His spirit into nothing. No, He commended His spirit to the Father. And we, too, when we commend our spirit, when we come to the end of our days, we can make one final offering to God in this life. We can offer God our death and say, "Into Your hands I commend my spirit. Lord, I love You. I give myself to You."

Consider giving God everything at the end of your life, but also now. Have you noticed how we have certain desires that cannot be met in this life? We have these desires for perfect beauty and goodness and truth and love, and we have some experience of these things. But we often are still left disappointed or hurt, longing for perfect truth and beauty and goodness and love.

Why do we have that desire? Because it is going to be realized one day in eternal life with God. Only in God are our desires truly and completely fulfilled. And so it keeps us going, persevering until the end. The way we live our lives here, especially during our struggles and sufferings, is how we can prove our love, and our trust, and our confidence in God.

So dear friends, let those be the last words of our lives, and our words today: "Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, into Your hands I commend my spirit."



# THE SEVEN LAST WORDS

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## EWTN Learn

With inspirational videos and an accompanying study guide, each series on EWTN Learn will deepen your love for God, renew your faith, and strengthen your prayer life. Go to [ewtn.com/learn](http://ewtn.com/learn) to sign up for The Seven Last Words and these inspirational series:

### **EUCCHARISTIC DEVOTION**

Jesus is **seeking you**. And He wants to **relate to you** personally. He wants a level of intimacy with you that is only possible through the Most Holy Eucharist. Will you answer His call? He is **waiting for you**.

We invite you to join Fr. Wade Menezes, CPM, for the Eucharistic Devotion EWTN Online Learning Series. This free video series guides you through reflections on the Most Holy Eucharist inspired by the writings of Mother Angelica and the great saints.

### **IN HIS SANDALS**

Sometimes it is difficult to understand God's Will for our lives, especially when times are tough or when something happens that disturbs us. We invite you to be still and sit with the Lord through online video reflections with EWTN Chaplain, Fr. Joseph Mary Wolfe, MFVA.

### **WOMEN MADE NEW**

Do you wrestle with anxiety? Do you have a wound that needs to be healed? Has someone hurt you deeply? There's only One who can help you: the Lord. In the Women Made New! EWTN Online Learning Series, you'll be inspired by the stories of Crystalina Evert and others – including Cameron Fradd, Joy Pinto, and Teresa Tomeo – as you hear how God helped them overcome trials. Most importantly, you'll understand that He will help you, too.



### About Us

Founded more than 40 years ago by a Poor Clare of Perpetual Adoration (PCPA), Mother Mary Angelica of the Annunciation, EWTN is the largest religious media network in the world. EWTN's 11 global TV channels are broadcast in multiple languages 24 hours a day, seven days a week to over 435 million television households in more than 160 countries and territories. EWTN platforms also include radio services transmitted through SIRIUS/XM, iHeart Radio, and over 600 domestic and international AM & FM radio affiliates; a worldwide shortwave radio service; one of the largest Catholic websites in the U.S. and second only to the Vatican worldwide; electronic and print news services, including Catholic News Agency, *National Catholic Register* newspaper, and several global news wire services; as well as EWTN Publishing, its book publishing division.

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