

A MEDITATION ON THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF CHRIST

As we prepare for this service of intercession please meditate on the reading 'Crown of Thorns'

CROWN OF THORNS

*They have crowned you, Lord, with a crown of thorns.
They have gathered thorns from earth's cursed fields
And braided you a crown.*

*You receive the thorns,
You accept the strife and sorrow of this earth
And shape it into a crown of victory.*

*To be aware is to suffer.
Your whole life is a willing suffering.
In your holy obedience, suffering is transformed
Into a king's shining crown.
Thus you prevail over suffering.*

*Out of the earth's pain and sorrow
Must be brought forth strength and understanding.
You bring us healing from our sorrows.
In suffering you honour us with a crown.
Our pains are your gracious visitation.*

*You wear the crown of thorns.
You desire to draw us up – closer to you.
You desire to take us up – into victory.*

*Yes, Lord, I am ready.
Impress on me, thorn-crowned one, your image,
That I may become like you.*

'Dorenkranz' by Karl Bernhard Ritter
Source unknown

Dying you destroyed our death

Dying, you destroyed our death,

Rising, you restored our life;

Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Dying you destroyed our death

Dying, you destroyed our death,

Rising, you restored our life;

Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Were you there?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

THE FIRST WORD

You wear the crown of thorns, Lord. It is a crown worn for those suffering because of their race.

We worship you, O Christ, and we praise you because in your suffering you redeem the world. Let us hear of the crown of thorns which grow in earth's cursed fields and feel with those who share in your suffering.

Let us hear of the thorns...

That we might share in your suffering.

Father forgive...

Luke 23:32-34a

³² Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³ When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus* there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [[³⁴ Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.']]*

This is the word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.

The plight of those experiencing racial persecution is read

Intercession

"We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that we may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light". (1Peter 2:9)

We remember the plight of the victims of racism. Hear our cry, O God, Break down barriers in people's hearts that divide. Make us open to one another regardless of our differences. Help us to receive these thorns, so as to reshape the face of humanity.

Were you there?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Silent Prayer

THE SECOND WORD

"When Jesus was made to suffer, he did not counter with threats, but delivered himself up to the one who judges justly." (1Peter 2:23)

We worship you, O Christ, and we praise you because in your suffering you redeem the world. Let us hear of the thorns which grow in earth's cursed fields and feel with those who share in your suffering.

Let us hear of the thorns...

That we might share in your suffering.

Today you will be with me in paradise

Luke 23:39-43

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding* him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah?'* Save yourself and us!' ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?' ⁴¹ And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' ⁴² Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into* your kingdom.' ⁴³ He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

This is the word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.

The Prison is read

Intercession

Hear of the thorns that grow in earth's cursed fields. Be aware of those who wait for the state to decide their fate. You too, O Christ, were imprisoned by righteous persons. Help us to have compassion in our judgement. Help us to receive these thorns. May they be reshaped into a crown of victory.

Were you there?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Silent Prayer

THE THIRD WORD

Out of the earth's pain and sorrow must be brought forth strength and understanding. You bring us healing for our sorrows.

We worship you, O Christ, and we praise you because in your suffering you redeem the world. Let us hear of the thorns which grow in earth's cursed fields and feel with those who share in your suffering.

Let us hear of the thorns...

That we might share in your suffering.

Women, this is your son

John 19:25b-27

^{25b} Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

This is the word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.

The plight of the refugees is read

Intercession

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourner, he upholds the widow and the fatherless. (Psalm 146:8-9)

Jesus Christ, your whole life was one of willing suffering. In your holy obedience, suffering is transformed into a shining crown. Thus you prevail over suffering. We remember the millions of refugees of this world and especially those still in detention in this country. Help us receive these thorns, for to be aware is to suffer. Stir us to action for the sake of the powerless.

Were you there?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Silent Prayer

THE FOURTH WORD

They have crowned you, O Lord, with the crown of thorns. They have gathered thorns from earth's cursed fields and braided you a crown.

We worship you, O Christ, and we praise you because in your suffering you redeem the world. Let us hear of the thorns which grow in earth's cursed fields and feel with those who share in your suffering.

Let us hear of the thorns...

That we might share in your suffering.

Eloi, eloi, lama sabachtani

Matthew 27:45-46

⁴⁵ From noon on, darkness came over the whole land* until three in the afternoon. ⁴⁶ And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The plight of those suffering in war is read

Intercession

"When all the prisoners in a country are crushed and trampled under foot, when human rights are over-ridden in defiance of the Most High. When people are deprived of justice, does not the Lord see it?" (Lamentations 3:34-36)

In suffering, Jesus you honour us with a crown. Our pains are your precious visitation. We remember before you the suffering people of the world – especially our brothers and sisters in the... . We remember those who long for justice. Help us to receive these thorns, to feel their pain, and to suffer with and for them.

Were you there?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Silent Prayer

THE FIFTH WORD

"The Lord grants the desires of those who fear him. The lord hears their cry and saves them. The Lord protects all who love him. But the wicked will God utterly destroy." (Psalm 145:19-20)

We worship you, O Christ, and we praise you because in your suffering you redeem the world. Let us hear of the thorns which grow in earth's cursed fields and feel with those who share in your suffering.

Let us hear of the thorns...

That we might share in your suffering.

I thirst

John 19:28-29

²⁸ After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.

This is the word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.

The plight of those suffering religious persecution is read

Intercessions

Jesus said, " If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you... If they persecuted me, they will persecute you." (John 15:18, 20)

As you had courage to suffer death, give us the courage to live in faithful witness to you. Let us remember those who are being persecuted for their religious beliefs. Let us remember those who defend freedom of conscience. We especially pray for the people of... .

Help us to receive these thorns, for thus can we suffer with our own.

Were you there?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Silent Prayer

THE SIXTH WORD

Feel their pain, hear their cry: Let them touch you deep in your heart. Christ died to heal and save the exploited. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

We worship you, O Christ, and we praise you because in your suffering you redeem the world. Let us hear of the thorns which grow in earth's cursed fields and feel with those who share in your suffering.

Let us hear of the thorns...

That we might share in your suffering.

It is finished

John 19:30

³⁰ When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

This is the word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.

The plight of the exploited worker is read

Intercessions

The enemy pursues my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground: he has made me dwell in darkness like the dead, long forgotten. Therefore my spirit fails; my heart is numb within me.

O God, we remember the powerless peasants of the land; the children forced to work for a pittance; those exploited in the work forces of the world. Lord, you accepted the strife and sorrow of this world. Reshape it into a crown of justice.

Were you there?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Silent Prayer

THE SEVENTH WORD

They came for Jesus in the dead of night. They took him away to be tortured and to die. We turn to pray for those who are made to 'disappear' because they have been found 'inconvenient' by someone in power.

We worship you, O Christ, and we praise you because in your suffering you redeem the world. Let us hear of the thorns which grow in earth's cursed fields and feel with those who share in your suffering.

Let us hear of the thorns...

That we might share in your suffering.

Father, into your hands

Luke 23:44-46

⁴⁴ It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land* until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵ while the sun's light failed;* and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last.

This is the word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.

The plight of the disappeared is read

Intercessions

Let your heart be pierced by this thorn. Sense the agony of unknowing. Feel the terror of waiting.

We remember the disappeared. We remember their loved ones. Thank you, Mother of all life, that you were present and that you received them. In faith we pray for eternal life. In hope, we pray for mercy. Help us to receive these thorns. May they be reshaped into a crown of victory.

Were you there?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
O sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Silent Prayer

CONCLUDING PRAYERS

Many are the cursed fields of the earth. All humanity cries out in lament. Let us pray with one mind and one heart with the crucified body of Christ.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of supplications.

If you, O Lord, mark our iniquities, Lord, who can stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits and in his word is hope; my soul waits for the Lord, more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the Lord!

For with the Lord there is steadfast love,

and with him is great power to redeem.

It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities. (Psalm 130)

Silent Meditation

As Jesus' death is incomplete without his resurrection, this service has no conclusion until Easter Sunday. When you are ready, you are asked to retire from the Church in silence and go to your homes.