

REFLECTION ON THE LAST WORDS OF JESUS

“FATHER, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:45).

Jesus is dying and calls out “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” He puts absolute trust in God the Father. Jesus also shows us how to surrender to the will of God. He does so in both his actions and words on the cross.

Although Jesus is divine and human, his divinity did not die - his human body did. St. Augustine reminds us that Jesus as the Word of God had no power to die for us. He became a human being because God loved us so much. The way God chose to give us life is the same way Jesus chose to become one of us that is out of love. “Of ourselves we had no power to live nor did Jesus of himself have the power to die. Through the cross we gave Jesus the power to die and he gives us the power to live”.¹

The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes the process of death as the separation of the soul from the body². Jesus experienced that separation of body and soul just as we will experience it when we die. When Jesus said he entrusted his spirit to the Father, he was giving us an example of the ultimate surrender to God that we must strive to obtain during our life time. As the perfect teacher, Jesus knew how difficult it would be to surrender our lives to God. So he tells us from the cross with his dying breath that the separation of his spirit from his body was based on his absolute trust in and surrender to God.

According to Scripture Jesus was “. . . cut off from the land of the living, struck for the sins of his people”.³ As a willing sacrifice Jesus’ trust in the Father echo’s in the passage “My

¹ From a sermon by St. Augustine, *Sermo Guelferbytanus* 3: PLS 2, 545-546

² Catechism of the Catholic Church p. 162, 624

³ Isaiah 53:8.

flesh will dwell in hope for you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your Holy One see corruption.”⁴ Jesus dies teaching us how to surrender to God even in death.

We must place our trust in God despite our sinfulness, sufferings and eventual death. If we continually strive to surrender to the will of our Father, he will not abandon us now or at our death. To have absolute trust in God is counter cultural. Especially in a culture where independence is valued as one of the highest assets to have and those who are not independent are considered almost useless. It becomes shameful to think of depending on someone or something other than ourselves. We have automatic connections to every part of the world at our finger tips. Social media lets us interact with each other without having to be physically present. Abandoning this sense of independence in our relationship with God seems daunting in comparison to our relationships in today’s world.

However, our relationship with God necessarily requires us to trust Jesus’s words and in his relationship with the Father. For Jesus told us that if we know him, we know the Father.⁵ From our understanding of Jesus we come to know him. As our relationship with Him grows, so does our relationship with the Father. Only through Jesus do we learn how to put our absolute trust in the Father.

When Jesus said, Father into your hands I commend my spirit, he also meant he was entrusting our souls to the Father too. After all, the ultimate sacrifice on the cross was for the reparation of our sins. By Jesus’ total surrender to and trust in God we benefit from his sacrificial death and learn from his example.

⁴ Acts 2:26-27

⁵ John 8:19

Today as we recall the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us remember what wondrous love this is that willing became a human sacrifice for our sins. Let us also strive to place our absolute trust in God and surrender our lives to His will. St. Augustine reminds us that: “The death of the Lord our God should not be a cause of shame for us; rather, it should be our greatest hope, our greatest glory”.⁶

Written by Sharon Ceasar, OPL 2016

⁶ See footnote 1