

Third Wednesday in Lent, March 4th

The Seven Sayings of Jesus on the Cross.

Behold your son: behold your mother. John 19:26-27

John 19:23-27

23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, **24** so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

"They divided my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots."

So the soldiers did these things, **25** but standing by 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 nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" **27** Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Savior did not possess many things. By the time He was crucified, all He possessed was an undergarment and a seamless tunic. Even this tunic was taken from Him, leaving Him drenched in blood, wearing only a loincloth and a crown of thorns. He had no jewels nor rings nor necklace on His body, no money on hand, nor the deed to any piece of property. Though He is Lord of all creation and so everything belongs to Him, according to His humanity He had absolutely *nothing*.

Typically when someone is on their deathbed, the matter of a last will and testament is eventually discussed. Who inherits the property of the deceased? Who gets what? What are the instructions given to the family to carry out this will? These have been ubiquitous questions for every family since the Fall in Eden when death was imposed on us. People die, someone gets their stuff, and somewhere along the line their dying wishes must be honored. This is crucial, especially with men being breadwinners, so that their families can continue surviving after they are gone.

Having been stripped of His last earthly possession, Jesus has absolutely nothing that He could give to people as an inheritance. I speak in earthly terms, because Him being on the Cross in the first place secures for us an *eternal* inheritance; His precious Blood being shed there wins for us the new heavens and new earth. But seeing this crucifixion on the ground level as it happened, it is clear to see that He would not be giving a standard inheritance for anyone. As we said, He had no title deeds to property on His person, no jewelry, and no money.

But He did have a will, and He spoke it in this passage. He had nothing to His Name, but He *did* have an Apostle who believed in that Name, one left after the others had fled. The Apostle in question, who refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," is St. John. He was the only one of the Twelve who stayed by His side even as the nails were driven into His hands and feet. He was all Jesus had in that moment, and Jesus knew that He had to say something for His mother's sake.

This is Christ's last command before His death upon the Cross. When He says to Mary, "Woman, behold your son," He is telling her to see St. John as the effective replacement for the son she was about to lose. When He says to St. John, "Behold, your mother," He is commanding St. John to respect this adoption and *treat* her as his mother. This means that the Fourth Commandment applied to

those two from that moment on. St. John must honor, obey, and provide for Mary. This ensures her survival and provisions.

You might be wondering to yourself, why were Christ's brothers not tasked with caring for Mary? Where is St. James, Joseph, Simon, St. Jude? Where are His sisters?¹ Mary was probably a widow by this point, but we have plenty of instances where the siblings of Christ are following her around and caring for her. What gives? Ah, but here my friends we find more tragedy. It appears that the earthly family of Jesus had abandoned Him too, with the lone exception of His mother and one aunt. They were not with her, they were certainly not following Him, and no mention is made of them. St. John says *he* was the one to take her in and care for her after the Crucifixion, meaning that these siblings were absent. We do not have all of the details in that moment, but Mary could sympathize with being abandoned to some degree; Jesus, full of compassion for His mother, refused to die on that Cross without first ensuring that she was not left totally alone.

With this last command, Christ shows us how entirely unselfish He is. Even when bleeding on that cross and enduring unimaginable pain, He still cared more for others than for Himself. He requested forgiveness for the men who crucified Him, reassured a thief that he would be with Him in Paradise, and made arrangements for His mother to be cared for. To be compassionate is one thing; to be compassionate to everyone around while suffering a slow execution, that is the surest sign that it was no ordinary man on that cross. Christ's limitless love and care for others shows us that He is truly the Son of God.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

1 Matthew 13:55-56, Mark 6:3