Lenten and Easter Meditation: Voices of the Passion: The Seven Words from the Cross: The Fifth Word, 1944

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THE SEVEN WORDS OF THE CROSS

THE FIFTH WORD

"I Thirst"

It is probable that the last three words from the Cross were spoken in rapid succession. The warm afternoon was wearing on. The scene had become more quiet. The crowd had been awed into silence by the mysterious noonday darkness and the strange words of the Man on the Cross in the center. The Roman soldiers looked on with indifference, glad that the whole mean business would soon be over.

Suddenly our Lord raises His head again and we hear the first and last reflection of His physical suffering. "I Thirst!" The fourth word from the Cross had been the echo of the deep suffering of His soul. The fifth word is a cry from the suffering of His body.

Once before He had spoken these words: "I thirst!" He had said them long ago to a woman at a well at Samaria. He had told her of the Living Waters which would never fail. Now He was bringing them to the world. By the thirst of His body He was quenching the thirst of human souls.

Perhaps the human race should not be very proud of its response to His cry. Someone took a sponge, wet it with vinegar, and held it to His lips. Perhaps it was better than nothing! At any rate, it was the world's last offering to its dying Saviour. Humanity carelessly brushing the lips of its God with vinegar!

It is tremendously important for us to see the full meaning of His cry. It reflects His complete and full humanity, "For we have not an High Priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He knows them all. He knows every touch of pain, every pang of hunger, every longing for water.
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He knows every depth of suffering. He knows them as our Saviour who has gone through them and made a path for us to follow. Now we know that He has been through everything which can possibly come to us on the journey of life.

There is a profound and intimate connection between this word from the Cross and the utter truth, the absolute rightness, the heavenly wisdom of His famous words, "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven." What do children do when they are in trouble, when they are hungry or thirsty, when they are suffering? They run to father and mother! To them they bring the pain of the broken toy, the lost penny, the cut finger. So we too! Now we can bring everything to Him. The broken dreams, the broken homes, the broken lives! Nothing is too small or unimportant to Him Who sees a sparrow fall, who numbers the hairs of our head, and Who now as He was saving the world, is thirsty.

May we not also apply this word to the life of the soul? As He was thirsty for water on the Cross, so today the world is filled by His consuming thirst for the souls of men. He reaches out for them through His Word and His Sacraments. He follows them to the ends of the earth and the corners of sin. The Cross is the ultimate evidence of His thirsting love for the sin-torn hearts of men. In the strange providence of God, it was also the quenching of that thirst. It was the gift of the living waters of redemption. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

We were not present at Calvary on that first Good Friday to give Him water. We can, however, even at this late hour in the time of men, help to quench His thirst for human souls. We can offer our hearts and lives to His service. We can take part in the great work of drawing human souls to the Cross. When we do that, we help to quench His divine thirst for the hearts of men.