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Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

"... AFTER BOWING HIS HEAD, HE HANDED OVER THE SPIRIT"

By Sr. Christine Hilliard, CSJ

Today's Gospel

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit. Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that

he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out.

JOHN 19:25-34

Reflection

The Fourth Gospel dramatically recounts Jesus' death as he is surrounded by family and friends. Set in context of him "handing over his spirit" and "blood and water flowing from his side" (after a soldier's lance stabbed him, assuring his death), these verses, ironically, also symbolize the birth of the Christian community. Jesus' giving of himself creates life, which happens whenever we give of ourselves.

Jesus' life is not taken from him. He dies when he is ready to die, at the proper time, when he has accomplished everything the Father has sent him to do and his mission of salvation is complete.

Fully aware and in command to the end, Jesus exclaims "I thirst," and sour wine is offered to him on a branch from the hyssop plant. This was the same plant used to smear lamb's blood over the door frames before Passover (Exodus 12:21-23) -- so a reminder of death setting people free. After receiving the wine, he announces: "It is finished." He has accomplished everything the Father has sent him to do. Then he hands over the Spirit, signifying both his death and the giving of divine life for the community of believers.



Crucifix illustration by Pixabay

For Prayer

*May the eyes of our hearts be enlightened that we may know
what is the surpassing power
of God's loving Spirit for us who believe.
Amen.*

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