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The Seven Last Words

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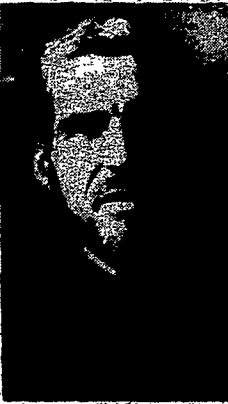
*Father,
into your
hands, I
commend
my spirit.*

”

Known as the “Seven Last Words,” the final utterances of Christ as He hung on the cross provide fit and interesting Lenten meditation. Each week during Lent, a different diocesan priest has discussed each of these “last words” in the Courier-Journal. The final writer of this special Lenten series is Father John Eudes Bamberger, Abbot of the Abbey of the Genesee in Piffard.

By Father John Eudes Bamberger

Most of the people I have seen die, at the very end, have no words left. Some die silently; others with some incoherent sound, usually expressing anguish and suffering. It is not pleasant for one to dwell on the final utterances of those who die in great pain, if my own experience is any guide in the matter, nor is it particularly helpful. There is something unabsorbable about such cries. We can only try to forget them.



With our Lord, though, it was quite otherwise. At the very end, Jesus had one last sentence to utter. It was not wrung from Him by the anguish and pain of his intense suffering. It was not a whimper or inarticulate cry. Nor was it a word of farewell. It was a loud shout of victory, St. Luke tells us. And it was a confident and deliberate act of a free man. An act that ratified earlier choices and sealed a lifetime of words that had prepared for this final word. Jesus' last word is a clear, simple affirmation of a trust that finds its response in the certitude of being loved. “Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit.”

No one knew the power of the words as Jesus did. He knew His own words had a special grace and power. He knew they were filled with significance for those who heard them. “He who is of God hears God's words.” He said when He was debating His critics, and He went on to add, “For I speak what I have seen with my Father.” He knew that when He spoke, His Father's honor was engaged. “He who sees me sees the Father,” he had explained. His deeds, his words, his very person, were a message from God. He knew His words would judge those who heard them. He realized they brought Spirit and life, but only to those who received them, in faith, with love, into the inner spaces of the heart.

Yes, the Lord had a special way with words. He knew their virtue. He realized that words not only move people in their affections and in their imagination, but that they enter into the fibers of their being. Into the deep spaces of the soul and to the very roots of thought and choice. He understood that words continue to live and act in these depths, that they form connections and help create images and sentiments. He understood how words transform our very way of being, our very sense of who we are.

That words make us and re-make us as we hear them and give our assent to them and allow them to become

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Holy Week at the Cathedral

Following is the schedule of events for the remainder of Holy Week at the Cathedral:

Wednesday — Regular Lenten Mass will be celebrated at 6:30 and 8 a.m. and 12:10 and 5:20 p.m. Confessions will be heard 4:5:15 and 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Thursday — There will be no morning Masses. The first Mass will be celebrated at 12:10 p.m. Confessions will be heard 4:5:15 p.m. Bishop Matthew H. Clark will preside at the solemn

concelebrated Mass of the Lord's Supper, 7:30 p.m.

Friday — Confessions will be heard 10-11 a.m. Living Stations of the Cross will be presented by the Sacred Heart Activities Group at 2:15 p.m. Bishop Clark will preside at the solemn Liturgy of the Lord's Passion, 3 p.m. Holy Communion may be received during this liturgy. Confessions will be heard following the rite until 5 p.m. the Cross will be presented by the activities group at 7:30 p.m. followed by a rite of Veneration of

the True Cross at 8 p.m. Confessions will be heard following the service.

Saturday — Church doors will open at 8 a.m. No Mass is permitted before evening on this day. Confessions will be heard from 11 a.m. to noon and 3:45 to 5 p.m. No 5 p.m. Mass will be celebrated. Bishop Clark and the cathedral staff will concelebrate the solemn Easter Vigil and the Mass of the Resurrection at 11 p.m.

Sunday — Easter Mass will be celebrated at 7 a.m., with spoken participation; 8:30 a.m., with sung par-

ticipation; 10 a.m., a family liturgy, with folk music; 11:15 a.m., the solemn sung Mass of the Resurrection, Bishop Clark presiding, with music by the Sacred Heart Adult Choir; 1 p.m., with sung participation; 5 p.m., Mass of the Evening of the Lord's Resurrection, with sung participation.

Bishop on TV

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will be televised saying the Mass for the shut-ins 8:30-9 a.m., Easter Sunday, over Channel 10.