



# St Mark's Parish

*Te Whare Karakia o Hato Maaka*

Reflections on the  
7 Last Words of Jesus on  
the Cross...  
and what they mean  
to us today



## Introduction

By Fr Sherwin Lapaan

During this time of lockdown and pandemic caused by COVID 19, we seek to protect the very ones closest to us. We do everything to protect our assets and love ones. This is a natural response and it is good. But we do not let fear blind us to the needs of other people, those needs that are the same as ours. We should not let our biases and anxiety destroy our genuine concern for our neighbours.

And as we prepare to enter into the Sacred Triduum, let us also take this time to examine ourselves inside and out. Since we can no longer make an excuse as not having time – let us also make the best of our isolations to reflect and ask questions:

Do we journey with the Lord as he goes through the stations of His cross and listen to His dying words? Do we faithfully follow Him both in good times and bad? Or are we fence sitter and observers? Or, are we faithful only conditionally—attend Mass (even on live streaming), say our prayers, follow the commandments but only when it feels good or only when we have problems and are in desperate need of the Lord's help?

In other words, do we forget about Him when it becomes inconvenient or uncool to be His disciple—or when times are too good for us to “bother” with the Lord?

In this time of crisis and trial, can we be faithful and trust in the Lord as He has trusted His Father's unconditional love when he said “Into your hands, I commend my Spirit.”





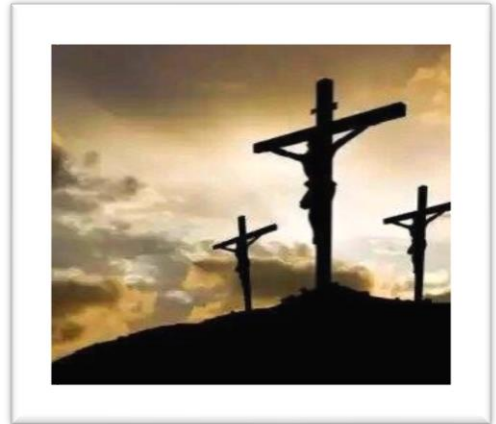
# St Mark's Parish

*Te Whare Karakia o Hato Maaka*

**“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)**

by Alice Sung

The first words that Jesus spoke after being crucified were of His forgiveness deeply rooted in love. Forgiveness for the soldiers who were put Him through one of the most horrible means of death; for those that mocked, scourged and tortured him along the way and the religious leaders who had sentenced an innocent man. Jesus had always preached that we should love our enemies, and this was the ultimate demonstration of this to all of us.



Completely forgiving someone that had hurt us immensely is easier said than done and this is because we often view it in a sole perspective of experiencing the pain being inflicted onto us. Here, Jesus had put Himself in the shoes of His enemies, acknowledging that “they know not what they do”. He does this because His love for everyone is limitless. For us to follow His amazing grace and mercy is to continually increase our love for all. We start with those in our family and friends whom we love dearly. Like a parent’s unconditional love for their children, what we learn through Jesus’ Parable of the Prodigal Son, is that a loving father or mother is always ready to forgive their child when they turn back, no matter how much wrong had been done.

If we try to bring ourselves through the lens of parents, taking onboard that unconditional love for one’s own child, we may find it easier to do what Jesus had done. Through empathy and care, we bring out their perspectives to understand the root causes for their actions. Many people during Jesus’ times, His often-humble ways would have been an unexpected character to accept and associate with a King. His teachings were revolutionary and impactful and were perceived as threat and stirred envy among religious leaders. Jesus already knew all of this, His enemies did not recognise Him as the Messiah, else, they would’ve casted away their own misjudgments and pride.

Jesus’ first words of forgiveness was not an absolution for their wrongdoing but an understanding that they were ignorant. They did what they thought was needed out of fear. What they wanted to gain for their own desires and convinced themselves is that there were no other better and rightful ways. They did not know what they were truly doing, and Jesus willingly forgave them. Even at His moment of unbearable torment, He displayed His Love and by dying for our sins, when we come to him in faith, we can be reconciled to God for eternity.

Truly, a wise person had once said, the first to apologise is the bravest, the first to forgive is the strongest and the first to forget is the happiest. True forgiveness comes naturally when our first step is to love and reflect on why others wrong us. We may end up realising that it was actually ourselves in the wrong. In either case, we learn that to reconcile is to allow us to find inner peace and joy. If Jesus was able to forgive, we are encouraged to overcome all the trials we encounter in our daily lives.



# St Mark's Parish

*Te Whare Karakia o Hato Maaka*

## **Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43) by Kurt Meyer**



Jesus died on the Cross to redeem mankind, to save us from our sins because He love us. Jesus was mocked, scorned, and tortured and condemned to death by Pontius Pilate. He carried His cross to Calvary, was nailed to the Cross and hung between two common criminals.

The second statement was " Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise " (Luke 23:43). This saying is traditionally called the "The Word of Salvation". According to Luke's Gospel, Jesus was crucified between two thieves, one who supports Jesus' innocence and asks Him to remember him when he comes into His kingdom.

Jesus replies, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise". Not only did Jesus forgive those who crucified Him, He also forgave one of the thieves crucified next to Him. When the thieves were put on the cross both of them cursed Jesus, but as time elapsed, one of the thieves had a change of heart. He said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus assured the dying man of His forgiveness and eternal salvation. What a wonderful faith this repentant sinner has in Jesus. Ignoring his own suffering Jesus responds with mercy. Jesus shows His divinity by opening Heaven for a repentant sinner - such generosity to a man that only asked to be remembered. This expression offers us hope for salvation, for if we turn our hearts and prayers to Him and accept His forgiveness, we will also be with Jesus at the end of our lives.

Jesus' words certainly brought the thief incredible solace and joy. If we are or should become victims of severe emotional or social isolation how might we treat those in the same boat, bearing a similar cross? Will we recognise Christ in them?

Our ultimate reward will be great one day should we too share Jesus Christ in Paradise. This brings into focus how we live each day and the best example of how to live in God's light is to following Our Lord's footsteps.

Jesus followed His Father's will in word, actions and in suffering for our sins to teach us the way to live and pray - all in complete trust in His mercy.

Amen.



# St Mark's Parish

*Te Whare Karakia o Hato Maaka*

## **“Woman, here is your son. Son here is your mother” - (John 19:26) By Leigh Green-Thompson**

*When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, “Woman behold your son!”. – John 19:26*

When I read this piece of scripture I get a sense of comfort. Jesus gifts us with his own mothers love. He gives us a companion and person that we can rely on and receive love and comfort from. He gives us someone who we can go to, to encourage us and guide us.

In the past year or so the theme of mercy has been prevalent in my life. More so coming to understand it and accept it, than anything else. Mercy; to give, love, accept; regardless of who you are or what you have done. In learning about the powerful and beautiful gift of mercy; it has challenged me in every aspect of my life to accept the love and encouragement I receive from others. It has also challenged me to show that same love and understanding toward others; and to be gentle and accepting of others.



Although, I am still challenged by this daily, I am slowly growing and becoming more myself and who I am called to be each day. I am still on my journey towards accepting the Father's merciful love and showing mercy to others. It is a process; and even though I have walked off course and wondered astray, the Father comes after me to lead me back on the right path. He gives me His mother to guide me, be there for me, intercede for me.

In this scripture I am reminded that I am not alone. I am reminded that I am called to walk and work together with others. I have the blessing of Jesus' own mother to call as my own; and she loves me and encourages me and accepts me; as I am. I have been given a sense of belonging. Someone cares!

The Father is giving me everything necessary to make sure that we are reunited! He is telling me that I am important to Him. I am loved. I am worthy. I am growing. I am journeying. I am becoming. Slowly. But I am not doing it alone.

Thank you Father for your merciful love. Thank you for the gift of your mama. Thank you for always caring. Thank you for accepting me as I am. Thank you for giving me a person; a place, of belonging. Help me to see myself in your eyes. Help me to see others with your eyes.

Mama Mary, thank you for your comfort and love. Pray for us.



# St Mark's Parish

*Te Whare Karakia o Hato Maaka*

**“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” (Mark 15:34)  
by Loiue Encabo**



One of the most memorable homilies I've heard told of an imagined conversation that Jesus had with the angels in Heaven.

According to this story, Jesus Christ entered Heaven after his passion and death and was asked by the angels: “Which part was the most painful to you: the carrying of the cross to Golgotha, your flogging and crowning of thorns, or was it the act of crucifying you itself?”

Jesus replied, “None of those you mentioned.”

“The most painful experience for me was when I was betrayed by my friends and disciples and I felt that I was alone.”

In our darkest moments we feel so alone, as though there is no one that cares for us in this world. Even Jesus, Son of God, felt the same way – He felt He had been abandoned by His friends, His disciples, and even by the Father.

Hence, in Mark 15:34 He cries “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” It is a sentiment that I'm sure most of us have had at some point in our lives, usually when we face serious tribulations. We feel that even God Himself has abandoned us.

But Jesus was never alone, not even when he was hanging from His cross. God the Father was with Him always and could hear His cries for help. Just as the Father is always with us and can hear our calls for help, even when we feel that we are alone in the world.

During these very difficult times amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, it is very easy for us to assume that God has indeed abandoned us. We may find ourselves asking “Eli, Eli lema sabachtani?” as Jesus did during His crucifixion. First of all, we need not feel guilty if we do so. Growing up Catholic, we are taught to have perfect faith and to never question anything about God. But by reading the Gospels we can see that even Jesus Himself, the Son of God, encountered a dark moment in His faith.

What is important for us to know is that God is always with us, even when it seems like He is not. When we experience tough times in life, let us remember that Jesus Christ is with us, interceding for us to God.

May we reflect on this thought this Lenten season. The world is undergoing a great pain but we are not alone, we never are alone, God is always with us.





# St Mark's Parish

*Te Whare Karakia o Hato Maaka*

## **"I am thirsty." (John 19:28) by Rosemary Grant**

As we reflect on Jesus' words "I am thirsty" we are faced with an expression and a moment that exemplify Jesus as a being who is fully human and fully divine.

The fully human Jesus was suffering incredible physical pain and mental stress. Up to this point in His crucifixion He has managed without accepting the drink offered him [Matt 27:34, Mark 15:23] and we are not told at any stage before this that He expressed physical suffering. So why now does he say it? Reading the whole verse of John we find: "Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

Up to this point, Jesus Son of mission: accepting that he [the thief next to Him, His Father. Now there is one [the human need] and by He will not be preventing he needs to do. He can now



God was living out his must die, caring for others mother], prayer to His thing more. He is thirsty accepting the drink, Himself completing what attend to his own human

need and by doing so move definitively towards His death as we see in the next Words. By accepting it, He also fulfils the prophesy of Psalm 69:21. By his asking for and accepting this drink we can see also the humility of God's Son, who was not too proud to wash his followers' feet, nor to accept charity from those who were putting Him to death. Some commentators suggest that there is also a deeper significance to his thirst - an eagerness to finish the task He was sent for and to show the entirety of His love?

So the message for us? Maybe we should consider what we ourselves thirst for? Is it something that we need instantly or can it be left for other priorities? Is it something deeper and more profound that needs God's help or will fulfil what he is calling us to do? Maybe we should, particularly in these days of lockdown and isolation reflect on whether we are able to ask for and receive humbly help for our own needs. Three simple words maybe give us more to reflect on than first appears.



# St Mark's Parish

*Te Whare Karakia o Hato Maaka*



## **"It is finished!" (John 19:30) by Chris Sullivan**

During this Covid19 Pandemic currently sweeping the globe, we have all been inspired by those who have poured out their lives to serve others. Doctors and nurses, supermarket workers, cleaners, police, and government officials working long hours, and often putting their lives on the line to keep us safe.

The Church has also poured itself out by providing food and other assistance to those most in need, particularly the poor, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled. We have also poured ourselves out to continue to provide spiritual nourishment to the people of God through innovative internet and social media initiatives.

Jesus did the same, and even more, for us. As God, he came down from heaven to become a human being, to show us just how much God loves us. He taught us how to love each other as God loves us.

On Good Friday, Jesus poured himself out completely for us. Pouring out his very life for us. On the cross he said "it is Finished". His mission was complete.

Most of us will not be called upon to give up our lives for others, and we need to be careful that we don't pour ourselves out so much that we have nothing left for our own needs, or those for whom we are responsible, such as our families.

"Love your neighbour as yourself" first requires us to love ourselves.

With that caution in mind, our Christian life is, however, supposed to be an imitation of Christ, as the famous devotional book "The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas à Kempis reminds us.

We are also called upon to pour out our lives in the service of others. In this way we follow what Jesus taught us to do, and we imitate him by serving others.

The resurrected Christ is with us and he strengthens and enables us to do that.



# St Mark's Parish

*Te Whare Karakia o Hato Maaka*

## **Father into Thy Hands I Entrust My Spirit (Lk 23:46)**

**by Mike Lobo**

Jesus showed us that if we can up give our will and spirit to God then the plans of God and the plans of man/woman can match. You give God the chance to help you. So, in this case death leads to resurrection. Jesus showed us that the only way to be free is to let go and let God.



### **Alert Level 1 - Reflection in your bubble.**

<sup>45</sup> while the sun's light failed,<sup>[1]</sup> and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. <sup>46</sup> Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into thy hands I entrust my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. <sup>47</sup> Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, and said, "Certainly this man was innocent!"

Are you able to let go of unforgiveness? Can you tear the curtain and be one with God? Close your eyes for a few moments and think of Jesus. Our sin put Him up there. An innocent lamb to be slaughtered for all of mankind's sins. The thought and weight of it made him sweat blood in the garden. Think about that. Even if you don't want to pick up that phone and call the person or persons who hurt you, can you please decide to forgive them in your heart right now. Let go and let God just as Jesus did. You will be set free.

### **Alert Level 2 Reflection of the Innocent?**

Would you like a plaster to be removed fast so there is one major pain, or would you like it to do it very slowly prolonging the pain and the agony? Forgiveness is like that ... the longer you take, there is more pain and agony. I know which one I want.

This reflection is for all of us who are innocent and held accountable for someone else's fault. Just like Jesus. You are not guilty. Close your eyes for a few moments and think of our dying Lord. He did not deserve this. Take a moment to forgive those involved in doing this to you. You will be set free just like Jesus.

### **Alert Level 3 Reflection of our habits.**

Dear brothers and sisters I am not sitting in judgement of you or your actions. We live at a time of much pain and suffering. We are responsible for our own actions. However, on this **Good Friday** I would like us to close our eyes and think of one area where we need these 7 last words badly. Is there an elephant in the room that we wish to bring to God and say "Father Into your hands I entrust this area of my life" I am so sorry I put my family in distress by my actions or inactions. AMEN