

The seven last words of Jesus on the cross

seven paintings and meditations

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Produced at

WhiteCottage Epiphanies

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Commentary on the paintings.

The Gospels say that Jesus spoke seven times while he hung dying on the cross. Each time he spoke has been called a “word” When I decided to paint the seven last words, I first contemplated the words as they appear in the four Gospels seeking to feel with Jesus. No Gospel has all seven of the words; some of the words appear in more than one Gospel, and others are only in one. So after *being in* the words, I decided what order felt *most* like the progression of events and emotions.

I made a variety of thumb-nail sketches and after some time decided that Jesus would be represented in each painting by a circle, and that each Word would also contain the cross. Finally, having simplified each painting to a circle, a cross and what is not-cross, I decided to use color to carry the emotional content:

- a **red circle** for Jesus – red for his life blood; - the **color spectrum** to carry the emotional content.

The meditations explore the emotional content of Jesus’ last hours.

In each “word” you will have the opportunity to reflect on three things:

- ❖ the scripture with the words of Jesus,
- ❖ your own personal experience in order to place yourself close to Jesus and try to enter his experience,
- ❖ a painting which is a visual interpretation of Jesus’ words.

The Setting

An innocent person who is sentenced to death
is symbolized in these paintings by a radiant red sphere;
the paintings also incorporate the method of execution – a cross.

In a spectrum of compassion and agony, the cross
pierces,
fades,
enfolds,
vibrates,
dominates
and disappears.

Forgiveness is called down like dew on dried ground.

Bright paradise is promised.

Comfort is offered to companions and parent.

A cry of thirst

and the despair of feeling deserted

culminate in serene surrender.

And then – it is accomplished; eternity is embraced.

**The First Word:
FORGIVENESS**



When they reached the place called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there and the two criminals also, one on the right, the other on the left. Jesus said,
“Abba, loving God, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.”
(Luke 23:33, 34)

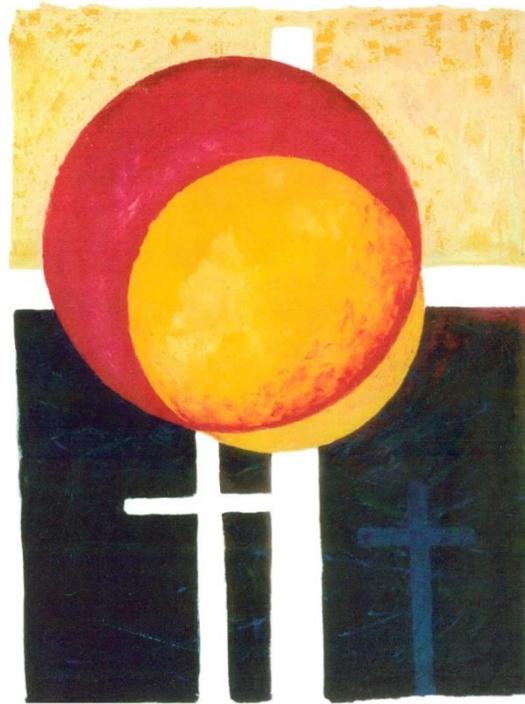
Reflect on the words and the image and consider

What does it mean to forgive?

Was there a time when you forgave someone or a time you were forgiven?

Have you ever refused to forgive someone or something?

**The Second Word:
ENCOURAGING ANOTHER'S GOODNESS, WHILE BEING TAUNTED,**



One of the criminals hanging there abused Jesus. “Are you not the Christ?” he said. “Save yourself and us as well.” But the other spoke up and rebuked the first saying, “Have you no fear of God at all? You got the same sentence as he did, but in our case we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong. Jesus,” he said, “remember me when you come into your reign.”

“Indeed, I promise you,” Jesus replied, “today you will be with me in paradise.”

(Luke 23:39-43)

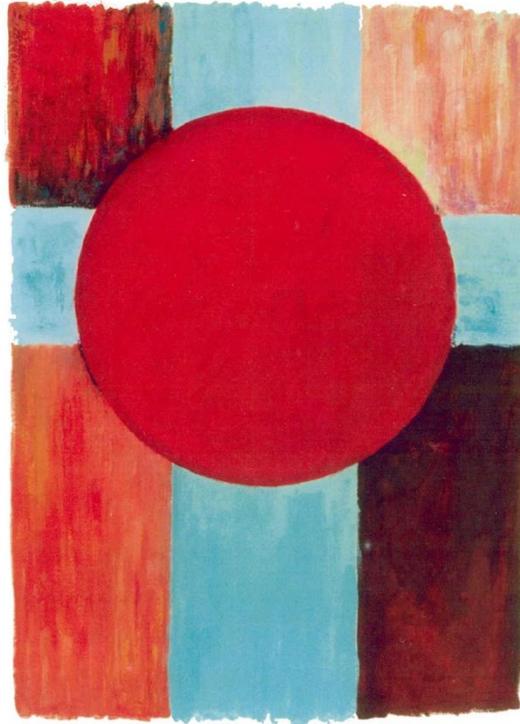
Reflect on the words and the image and consider

How do you feel when you or someone else mocks another person?

Think about a person who is a thorn in your side: how does your attitude promise paradise for this person or make it seem farther away?

How can you learn to “promise paradise” to others, in your family, in your neighborhood, in your place of work? Or to the second thief?

**The Third Word:
OFFERING COMFORT**



Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciples he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother,

“Woman, this is your son.”

Then to the disciple he said,

“This is your mother.”

From that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home. (John 19:25-27)

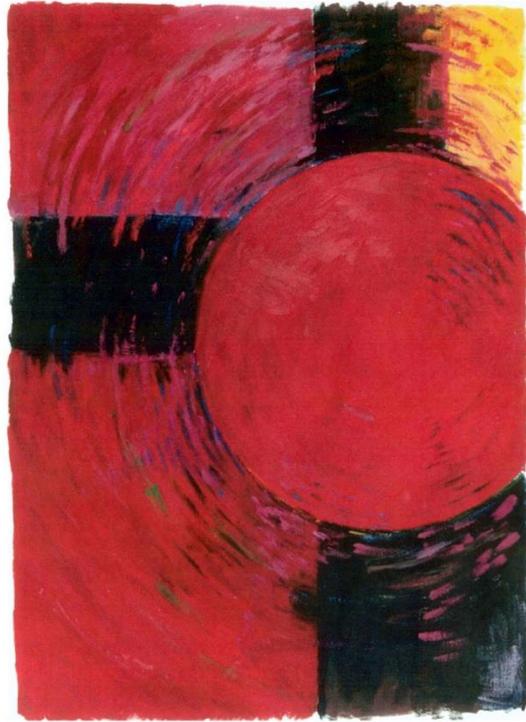
Reflect on the words and the image and consider

If you knew that you were dying, how would you deal with the pain it caused your family and friends?

How do you reach out to others who experiences pain or loss?

What can “family” look like and how can we become family?

**The Fourth Word:
THIRST**



After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed, and to fulfill the scripture perfectly he said: **“I am thirsty.”** (John 19:28)

Reflect on the words and the image and consider

Was the thirst of Jesus physical? Spiritual? Emotional?

What have been your thirsts, your desires, your hopes?

How do you deal with “thirsty” people? What do you give them?

**The Fifth Word:
FEELING ABANDONED / DESERTED / IGNORED**



When the sixth hour came there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice,
“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
(Matt. 27:45-50, Mark 15:33-34)

Reflect on the words and the image and consider

What would it be like to feel abandoned, forsaken, forgotten by God?
by another person or by a group?
by a loved one?

Are you ever an outcast – an outsider, one abandoned or ignored?

What can you do for the “outcasts” – *people abandoned, rejected, ignored* – among your friends or in your church or parish or neighborhood?

The Sixth Word: RESIGNATION / SURRENDER



It was now about the sixth hour and, with the sun eclipsed, a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. The veil of the Temple was torn right down the middle; and when Jesus had cried out in a loud voice, he said,

“Abba, loving God, into your hands I commit my spirit.”

(Luke 23:44-46)

Reflect on the words and the image and consider

In the face of the cross, in the face of suffering in your life, how have you been able to hand that over to God and surrender to it?

In a good sense, when or how do you stop struggling against suffering or disappointment or frustration?

How do you say, “this has happened”, and leave it in God’s hands?

How do you abandon yourself to God – to what *has* been so that what *will* be – what *can* be – may happen?

The Seventh Word: ACCEPTANCE



After Jesus had taken the vinegar he said,
“It is accomplished”
and bowing his head he gave up his spirit. (John 19:29)

Reflect on the words and the image and consider

What does it mean to be finished, to accept that the end has come?

When do you let yourself say, “It is done; I’ve done my best, or the best I could at the time”?

How do you become peaceful in the face of apparent failure or incompleteness? How do you help others attain peace?