

Jesus prays in the Upper Room and hours later from the gibbet of the cross--

In the Upper Room, on the night before Jesus died out of love for us, He prayed what has come to be known as the “priestly prayer.” (CCC 2747) This took place at the Last Supper. Recorded in John 17, Jesus allows us “to eavesdrop on his threefold prayer to the Father—a prayer for himself, for his disciples and for those, including ourselves, who would follow him. These words were designed to reassure his apostles that he was and would continue to intercede for them prayerfully, even after he left them for the last time.” (Vaghi, Meeting God in the Upper Room 50).

In addition to these final prayerful words of Jesus, He would also allow us to hear the words He would pray from the gibbet of the cross as He hung dying for our salvation. In effect, there are seven sets of words: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”; “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”; “Woman, behold your son”--“Behold your mother”; “I thirst.”; “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”; “It is finished.”; “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” CCC 2605

If we listen closely, listen from the depth of our hearts, we will get a privileged glimpse of the boundless depth of His prayer. Jesus simultaneously speaks and acts from the pulpit of the cross. Precisely in the midst of His terrible pain and suffering, the deed of His whole life, His crucifixion, the supreme act of His unselfish love, Jesus also speaks. He prays.

His prayerful words give lasting credibility to His wondrous act of love for us. They are words of prayer, words from the Hebrew psalms, words of communion with His Father, words of communion and solidarity with and for others to hear, words for us to hear over and over again.

Thus both in the Upper Room at that final supper and hours later from the wood of the cross, prayer was on the mind of Jesus and in His sacred heart. Prayer is, if you will, the bridge between the Upper Room and the Cross.

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