

*Host or designated reader/leader begins the Upper Room prayer hour by reading this message from Fr. David:*

## Message for January/February 2022

Dear Friends in Christ:

1. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34).
2. “You will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).
3. “Woman, behold your son!” (John 19:26-27).
4. “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46).
5. “I thirst!” (John 19:28).
6. “It is finished!” (John 19:30).
7. “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46).

These are the Last Words of Christ spoken from the Cross, and they are profound indicators of the mind of Jesus and His Divine will. Nobody will ever communicate something so profoundly inspiring from a place of death and dying, so deep or inspiring. Jesus spoke these Gospel words as a part of God’s Revelation to us; these are important words that guide us to the most important thing of all, the gift of eternal life and attaining the Kingdom. In this Upper Room we will consider word number two: “You will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).

In Christ;

Fr. David

*Open with Sign of Cross and pray to the Holy Spirit:*

### Prayer to the Holy Spirit

**L:** Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth Your Spirit, O Lord, and they shall be created.

**R:** And You shall renew the face of the earth

**L:** Let us pray – God our Father, pour out the gifts of your Holy Spirit on the world. You sent the Spirit on Your Church to begin the teaching of the Gospel; now let the Spirit continue to work in the world through the hearts of all who believe. Through Christ our Lord.

**R:** Amen

**L:** You, O lord, will open my lips.

**R:** And my tongue shall announce Your praise.

**L:** Incline unto my aid, O God.

**R:** O Lord, make haste to help me.

**L:** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

**R:** As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen

*The goal of life is to die with His grace. The Good Thief died in such a way. Despite his nefarious life of crime, the Good Thief chose to believe in the Lord, to see Jesus in the light of the truth, that Jesus had done nothing wrong, that He didn't deserve to die like him and his partner. And Jesus told him "Today you will be with me in paradise." And so, in a brief moment, an encounter lasting seconds Jesus re-routed the direction of an immortal soul from darkness to light and the Good Thief was the first person ever to steal heaven.*

- 1) Is that all it takes to be saved? The final moment of recognition of Jesus? Then why do we work so hard?
- 2) What about the whole body of work that you spent years working on... the virtuous deeds, the faithfulness to prayer, fasting and almsgiving? Do these actions matter less or more now? Discuss the teaching of Jesus "The last shall be first, and the first shall be last. Does this console you or irritate you a bit?
- 3) Do you believe that everyone who goes to heaven "steals" heaven in a way? In what way?
- 4) Finally, what does the promise of eternal happiness for the Good Thief say about Hope for all and their salvation?

CCC 1021

*Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ. The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith. The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul -- a destiny which can be different for some and for others.*

- 1) How do you answer these questions? How do you merit eternal happiness? How do you end up in Purgatory? Who deserves to go to Hell?
- 2) Obvious differences exist between each state of being. Talk about your understanding of what each place is like and how they are very different from each other.

3) What is the difference between the particular and general judgments?

This second word is about heaven; the first word was about forgiveness. Forgiveness of self and others, forgiveness by God for our sins is so important to finding our eternal reward. In forgiveness we can let go and let God to direct our lives whether that is forgiving ourselves, forgiving others or God forgiving us.

- 1) Discuss the mechanism of forgiveness, how does it work in your life?
- 2) What did the Good Thief do to gain forgiveness?
- 3) Which is the hardest: forgiving oneself, forgiving others or letting oneself be forgiven by God?
- 4) Is there Eternal Happiness for those who refuse forgiveness”?

Now read CCC 981 & 982

*981 After his Resurrection, Christ sent his apostles "so that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations." The apostles and their successors carry out this "ministry of reconciliation," not only by announcing to men God's forgiveness merited for us by Christ, and calling them to conversion and faith; but also, by communicating to them the forgiveness of sins in Baptism, and reconciling them with God and with the Church through the power of the keys, received from Christ:*

*[The Church] has received the keys of the Kingdom of heaven so that, in her, sins may be forgiven through Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit's action. In this Church, the soul dead through sin comes back to life in order to live with Christ, whose grace has saved us.*

*982 There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive. "There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest. Christ who died for all men desires that in his Church the gates of forgiveness should always be open to anyone who turns away from sin.*

Conclude by praying a Divine Mercy Chaplet