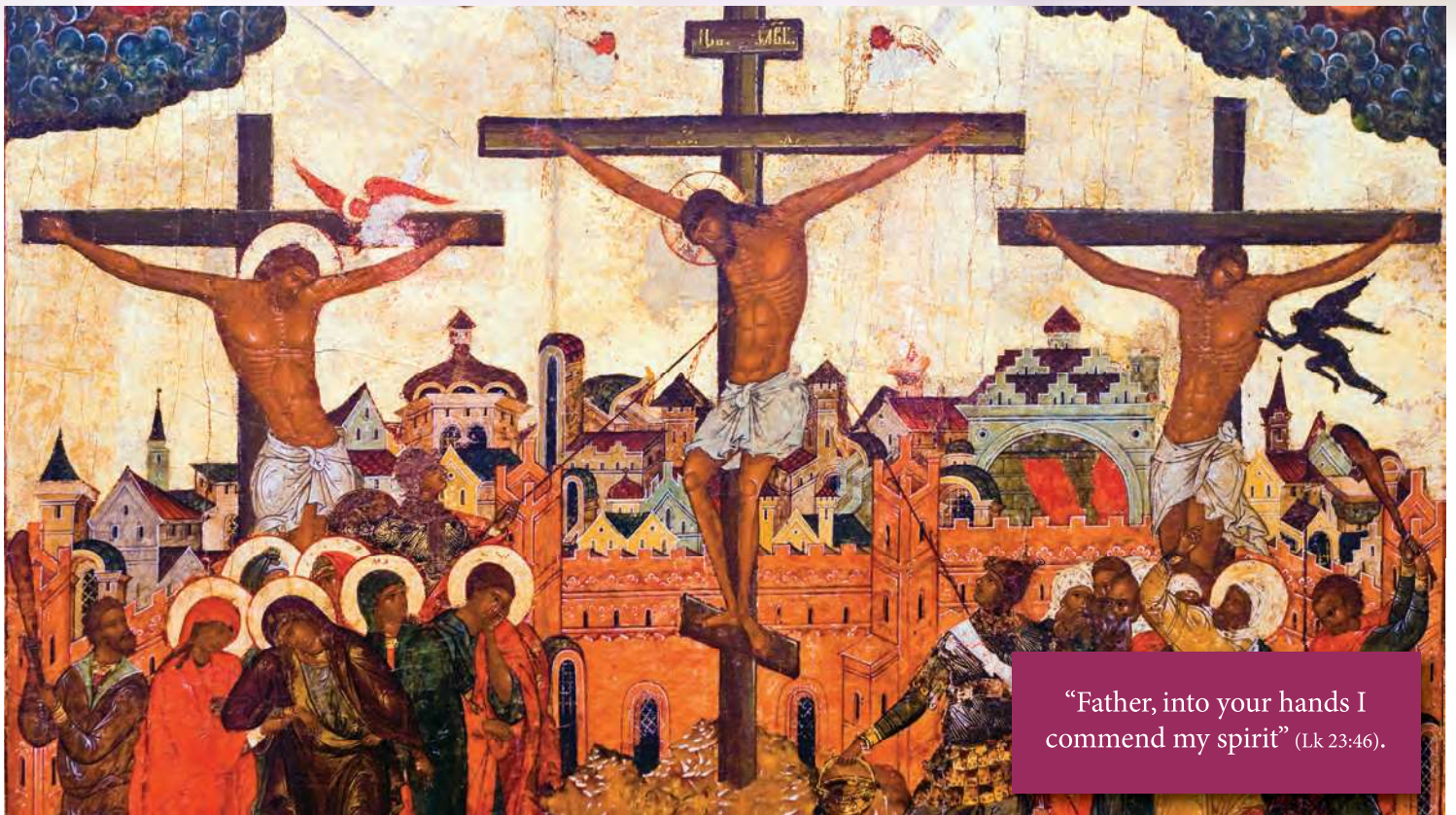


# Conversion of Heart

Lenten Reflections on Mercy and Forgiveness

Week 6

**READINGS:** *Isaiah 50:4–7; Philippians 2:6–11; Luke 22:14–23:56*



“Father, into your hands I  
commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46).

## Christ's sacrifice allows us to find meaning in suffering

**T**he Passion of Christ is the pinnacle of all human suffering gathered together in one man, Jesus of Nazareth. He believed you were worth it. He believed everyone, even those who seem farthest away from him, to be worth dying for.

It is through the Cross that we come to understand God's mercy. In the Crucifixion, the greatest sacrifice the world has ever known takes place. On that tree, God's only Son shows us that the path toward salvation requires his saving power, his unending gift of forgiveness.

God desires mercy so much that he

was willing to die to prove to us its worth. In dying he destroyed death, and in rising again he restored us to life. Without this act of ultimate sacrifice, our own sufferings would have no purpose. But because of his pain, we are able to find meaning in our sufferings.

We partake in the mystery of suffering by uniting our trials and tears to Jesus. He suffers alongside us in times of need and never ceases to call us through difficult times to a closer communion with him.

In his mercy, we are given hope that one day our darkness will become light

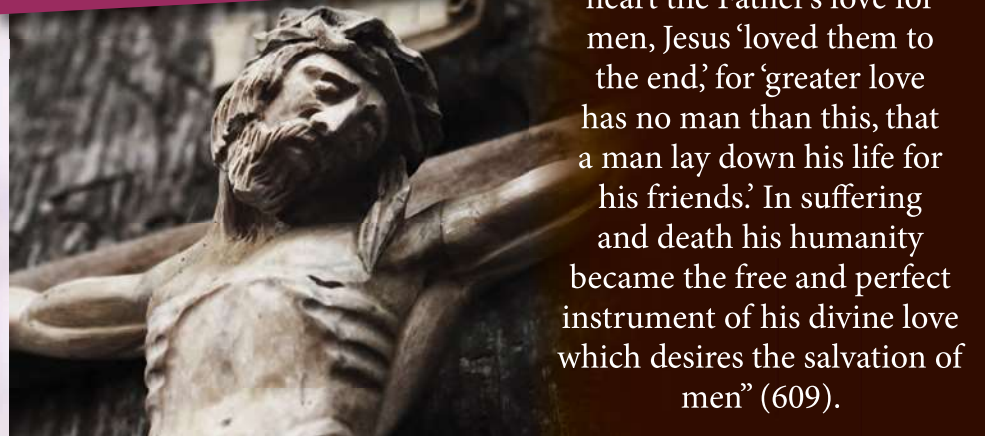
and our sorrows will become eternal joy. We need only to accept our crosses and follow him (see Mt 16:24).

### For Reflection

- › What crosses are you given to bear during this time in your life?
- › How can these crosses help you become holier?
- › What does the passion and death of Jesus teach you about the importance of your suffering?



## Catechism Chat



“By embracing in his human heart the Father’s love for men, Jesus ‘loved them to the end,’ for ‘greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ In suffering and death his humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love which desires the salvation of men” (609).



## Saint

### The great denial was forgiven

Peter was one of Jesus’ closest followers. He was one of the first called by Jesus and stood by Jesus at almost every moment of his public ministry. However, when it came time for Jesus’ passion and death, Peter denied his master and was too ashamed, or afraid, to see his Lord die at the Crucifixion. After Jesus rose from the dead, one of his first tasks was to assure Peter that his sins were forgiven and that he would lead the rest of the apostles after Jesus’ ascension into heaven.

Saint Peter committed one of the worst sins a person can commit when he denied the man who he knew to be the Son of God. However, his repentance was pure and his sorrow was genuine. When he was forgiven by Jesus, his sadness and anguish were like coals turned into diamonds of an unshakable faith and an unquenchable thirst for souls.

God’s mercy has a way of changing the very fabric of who we are. May he fashion our souls into the great saints we were meant to be.

“Mount Calvary is the academy of love.”

~ ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

## Faith Lesson



### Our suffering can purify our souls

One of the great deposits of spiritual power in our world comes through what is known as redemptive suffering. We believe as Catholics that our pain and sorrow can be used as a means of spiritual nourishment. When we take on the hardships of life, either voluntarily or involuntarily, we are able to offer them up for the betterment of ourselves and others. In doing so, we do as St. Paul tells us: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am fill-

ing up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church” (Col 1:24).

This begs the question, Was there something lacking in Jesus’ perfect sacrifice on the cross? Of course not! But the effects of sin still remain in our world, much like a house in need of a good cleaning. Redemptive suffering, then, provides us with the ability to “clean up the mess” by purifying our souls and aiding in the sufferings of others. We thus work together with God and unite our pain to the cross, where it is nailed, put to death, and poured out into the world in the form of healing, understanding, and hopefulness.



## Prayer

O my Jesus, who suffered and died for my sins, I pray that you might grant me the gift of your forgiveness. Allow me to share in your suffering so that I may die to my sins and share fully in your risen life with you and all the saints. I am yours. Amen.