**The Seven Last Words from the Cross are seven expressions biblically attributed to**[**Jesus**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus)**during**[**his crucifixion**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus)**. Traditionally, the brief sayings have been called "words". They are gathered from the four**[**Canonical Gospels**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonical_Gospel)**. Three of the sayings appear only in the**[**Gospel of Luke**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Luke)**and two only in the**[**Gospel of John**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John)**. One other saying appears both in the**[**Gospel of Matthew**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Matthew)**and the**[**Gospel of Mark**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Mark)**, and another is only directly quoted in John but alluded to in Matthew and Mark. In Matthew and Mark, Jesus cries out to God. In Luke, he forgives his killers, reassures the**[**penitent thief**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penitent_thief)**, and commends his spirit to the Father. In John, he speaks to his mother, says he thirsts, and declares the end of his earthly life.**

**A person's**[**final articulated words**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_words)**said prior to death or as death approaches generally are taken to have particular significance. These seven sayings, being "**[**last words**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_words)**", may provide a way to understand what was ultimately important to this man who was dying on the cross. A series of sermons are sometimes offered in churches on Good Friday. These sacred words have been put to classical music. For many years, Bishop Fulton Sheen preached these words at St, Agnes Church in New York. Tonight, I will offer a brief reflection on the first words of Jesus on the Cross: Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.**

**I have had three of experiencing three amazing words of people who were near death. I think of a parishioner I knew In Long Island who was in her last hours. I asked her if she was afraid or dying. With a smile, she said *I can’t wait to get to heaven and see God.* It was one of the most powerful and sincere statement of statement of faith ever heard.**

**I happened to be visiting some friends in Saratoga Springs, the town where we had had our nursing home for our men before we moved to Timonium. One of our priests, a former gruff navy chaplain was dying had asked to see me. I went to see him immediately and wanted my blessing before he died since I was his provincial. I was humbled by the witness of his love our Redemptoriist commitment and his respect for his vow of obedience. I sat with him for a while, but he dismissed me by saying *you have other things you need to do.***

**My brother-in law- was dying at home and my sister was so very present to him. Every cough and twitch of his body filled her with anxiety. I was visiting and getting ready to go back to my parish. I said *how you are Jack*. The last sentence he ever spoke was *I am great.* He wanted to assure my sister and I not to worry; *he was great*. Tthe last sentence he spoke were words of comfort to those he loved. He wanted us to be at peace.**

**Our Church has a powerful spiritual tradition called the seven last words of Christ. Our four Gospels reveal to us seven sentences that Jesus spoke while he was dying the horrible death of crucifixion. In the midst of his searing agony he spoke seven times. In a most dramatic way, the truly reveal the heart of Jesus Christ. While he is gasping to breathe, with excruciating pain raging throughout his body from the previous brutal scourging,, his had battered with a crown of thorns, nails piercing his skin, with people cursing and mocking him, he offers this profound prayer to his Father: Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. Even in very last hours on earth, he continues to offer mercy and forgiveness to those who are killing him with cruelty. God is always merciful even to the very men who are killing him. In our frail and sinful humanity, we take hopeful trust in his mercy for each one of us.**