Fifth Wednesday in Lent
West Henrietta - 1962

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. John 19: 28 After This, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I THIRST.

This fifth word of our dying Savior from the Cross is the shortest of the all. It consists of only two words: I Thirst. In the original Greek, it is one word of only four letters. Yet, when this word of Christ is studied in its setting when we remember who Jesus is, and why He said, I thirst, then this short gasp becomes a mighty big and comforting word.

In its literal sense this is a cry of intense physical thirst. Jesus, wh was true God from everlasting to everlasting, was also a true man. He thirsted as we thirst. How intense that thirst must have been! Our text begins: After this, H saith, I thirst. We naturally ask, After what? The answer is after He had gone through that horrible suffering which started in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before and ended with His full payment for our sins on the Cross. After He had bee betrayed by Judas and denied by Peter; after the priests and leaders of the church had hired false witnesses and condemned Him to die; after Pontius Pilate had coward ly given sentence that He be crucified; after He had been crowned with thorns, beaten over the head, scourged 'til His flesh hung in shreds on His back; after He had been forced to carry the cross and had been nailed to it; after the ridicule an mockery of the people who cried, If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cros after hanging on the cross for almost six hours, every muscle tortured and strained His hands and feet bleeding; after He had nothing to eat or drink for almost 24 hou After His lips ~~were~~ had become parched and dried, and His tongue - thick and swollen - stuck to the roof of His mouth with burning fever; after He had been forsaken by all people, by the angels, by God the Father; after His soul had been made an offering for sin in the pangs of hell, and He had cried, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? -- after this, He said, I Thirst.

There is no question that He was thirsty. Every person crucified was horribly plagued with the tortures of thirst. But remember, Jesus wasn't just crucified. He was made an offering for sin. He was condemned, rejected, damned by Go as our substitute. He was sent to hell in our stead. You recall how the rich man

in hell cried out, O Father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. If he suffered so intensely for his own sins - the sins of one man - how intense must have been the suffering of Christ, who suffered for the sins of all people! If this rich man cried and pleaded for water, it is any wonder that Jesus who suffered for the sins of the whole world cried, I thirst?

Certainly Jesus didn't have to let the devil torture Him in hell. He didn't have to ask for water. All things were made by Him. He was the One who gave the Israelites water from the rock, the One who controls the rivers and the seas. With His almighty power He could have quenced His thirst, healed His aching body, and come down from the cross. But He didn't. He didn't use His divine power. He stayed where men had nailed Him. He went where God had sent Him. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the shameful death of the Cross. He did this that He might redeem you and me, lost and condemned creatures. The nails could not hold Jesus to the cross. The devil could not force Jesus into the sufferings of hell. But His deep love for you and me could - and did. Viewed in that light, this little word, I thirst, becomes a might big, important, and comforting word for us.

Besides physical thirst, there is also a spiritual thirst, a thirst of the soul. The Bible speaks much about spiritual thirst. When Jesus said, Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, He was speaking of spiritual thirst. When He said, He that believeth on Me shall never thirst, He was speaking of spiritual thirst. Again, when Jesus stood in the Temple and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink, He was speaking of spiritual thirst. St. John, speaking of the souls in heaven, says: They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more...The Lamb shall lead them unto living fountains of water. He is speaking of spiritual thirst. David, in Psalm 42, cried: As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God, My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. On the Cross we have the fulfillment of David's prophecy. Jesus' soul thirsted for God, for the living God. Remember what occurred just before

He cried, I thirst? During the three hours of darkness, God the Father directed all His wrath - all the punishment which was due sinners - upon Jesus. The punishment for sins became more and more intense until completely cast out of God's presence, He cried, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? How the heart of Jesus must have yearned to return again to His loving Father. His soul literally thirsted for God, for the living God!

To be separated from God is a terrible experience. Persistent separation from God leads to hell. Yet, sinful men continue in their struggle to get away from God - to get as far away as possible. They feel uncomfortable in church because God is there. They feel uncomfortable when they read the Bible. They don't want to discuss religion. They don't want to hear the Word of God or listen to the Will of God, because God's commands always arouse and prick their consciences. In their effort to get away from God's commands, they reject God. And the result? Take a look at the sorrow in the world! Take a look at the sorrow in the homes of our American people! Take a look at the sorrow in men's hearts!! Take a look, if you can, into hell! That's the result of man's spearation from God.

Certainly God does not want it this way. He wants man with Him in blessed communion - where there is fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore. That is why God sent His only Son. That is why Jesus came - to bring us back to God. I cannot help but believe that when Jesus said, I thirst, He was also thirsting and yearning for the salvation of men. Throughout His suffering His thoughts were with man. Surely now, too, He was thinking of man - of the people of the 20th Century - of you and me. When He remembered how badly we would need His redemption; how some would wilfully reject His redemption, how others would mock at it; and how still others would simply neglect it because of their interest in too many others things, is it any wonder that He cried, I Thirst?

You know what the people did on Calvary: Some believed; some mocked; others cried, Away with Him!; most of them were indifferent. So it is today. Some believe; others rave against Him; the majority are indifferent. Hanging on the Cross, Jesus

2 billion heathen people in world steeped in superstition, unbelief, & sin.

saw our world as it is today. He saw the good and the proud, the mockers and the indifferent, you and me; different in many respects, yet all alike - sinners, in need of forgiveness. He saw you as you are sitting here tonight. Some of you active church members, others not; some of you sitting erect, others not; some of you wide-awake, others half asleep; some of you praying, others not; some of you loving Him, others indifferent. He saw you then as He sees you tonight, different in many respects, yet all alike in that you all need the redemption He came to obtain for you. He is yearning, thirsting for your salvation. He is yearning and thirsting for you - that you might be His own and live under Him in His Kingdom; that you might rededicate yourselves to Him tonight; that you might not yield to the many temptations that surround you; and that eventually you might have His full salvation in heaven.

Those same arms once extended on the Cross are now extended to you in open invitation, as Jesus cries, I thirst -- for you! The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely..... And Jesus said unto them,...he that believeth on me shall never thirst. Jesus said to the woman at Jacob's well: Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of sater springing up into everlasting life. The woman said unto Him: Sir, give me this water! The water which Christ gives freely is the total and complete forgiveness of sins which He won for you just before He said, I thirst. God grant that everyone of you may say to Jesus: Sir, give me that water. You need it. Jesus has it! Please believe it!

Amen.