

'I am thirsty'

John 19 : 25b – 29

Bible Verse(s):

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.

Reflection:

In the book, 'Seven words for the 21st Century' (Ed. Newell 2002), Sabina Alkire writes about the phrase 'I thirst'. She explains how the brothers and sisters of Mother Theresa share an insight into the words from the perspective of the poor.

We could focus on Jesus' pain and inevitable dehydration after being on the cross for such a long period of time. Do the words refer to Psalm 69 ('I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched')? Perhaps the words indicate Jesus' willingness to drink the cup he had prayed God might take away from his lips?

Alkire suggests that so often – however we look at the words 'I Thirst' , we do so from the perspective of the past. In contrast the sisters and brothers of St Theresa hear the words in the present. She writes,

'They hear 'I thirst' in the stumpy limbs of the leper, in the slumped shoulders of the depressed and the unloved, in the watchful eyes of the AIDS patient, the lilting voice of the orphan, and the rasp of the dying.'

In other words, Christ is present in those who suffer.

Matthew 25 : 40 says 'And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell **you**, just as **you did it to** one of the least of these who are **members of my family, you did it to me.**"

Apparently Mother Theresa wrote the following words in a letter to her community :

"'I thirst' and 'You did it to me' – Remember always to connect the two'

Such an understanding of the words 'I thirst' inspires Christian believers to act on behalf of the poor and marginalised. By our acts of love and service we somehow hope to quench the thirst of God.

In the last letter she ever wrote to her community, on 5th September 1977 Mother Theresa said this :

'Let our gratitude be our strong resolution to quench the thirst of Jesus by lives of real charity – love for Jesus in prayer, love for Jesus in our Sisters, love for Jesus in the poorest of the poor – nothing else'

She died that day.

Who are the poorest of the poor in our world in 2020? What acts of love and service can we offer to quench the thirst of Jesus today?

Blessing:

What I know is this, that this blessing will begin as soon as you set out.

That this blessing will meet you in every step.

That it is gladly bound to you and cannot do without you.

That you are part of the path this blessing makes: that it creates a way not only for you but through you and in you, that it finds its road as you find yours.

I can hardly fathom how it is that this blessing is already waiting for you even as you fashion it, step by faltering step.

But there it is, in all its wending mystery.

So may you meet it with courage. May you enter it with clarity. May you walk it with wisdom. May you travel it with joy.

May you come to it not as one buffeted by chance but as one who has chosen. Uncertain,
perhaps; unready,
perhaps; but this path.

This one.

With abandon.

This.

Jan Richardson