



Seven Last Words from the Cross

A Meditation for Good Friday, 2021

The Cranmer Group

As Jesus hung on the cross, he uttered seven final words, of profound significance to those who contemplate his passion and death. For centuries, these words have formed the basis of Passiontide devotions for the consolation of believers, such as the 14th-century English mystic, Julian of Norwich, who wrote, of her contemplation of Christ's passion:

"Suddenly it came into my mind that I ought to wish for the second wound, that our Lord, of his gift and of his grace, would fill my body full with recollection and feeling of his blessed Passion, as I had prayed before, for I wished that his pains might be my pains, with compassion which would lead to longing for God... And at this suddenly I saw the red blood trickling down from under the crown, all hot, flowing freely and copiously, a living stream, just as it seemed to me that it was at the time when the crown of thorns was thrust down upon his blessed head... With this sight of his blessed Passion and with his divinity, I saw that this was strength enough for me, yes, and for all living creatures who will be protected from all the devils from hell and from all spiritual enemies."

I hope that this reflection, using artworks and music also inspired by Christ's passion, will help to deepen your understanding of Jesus, and your faith in him.



Crucifixion
(Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice)
Jacopo Tintoretto

The First Word:

A Word of Forgiveness (Luke 23:34)

*Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.**”*

Meditation

Prayer

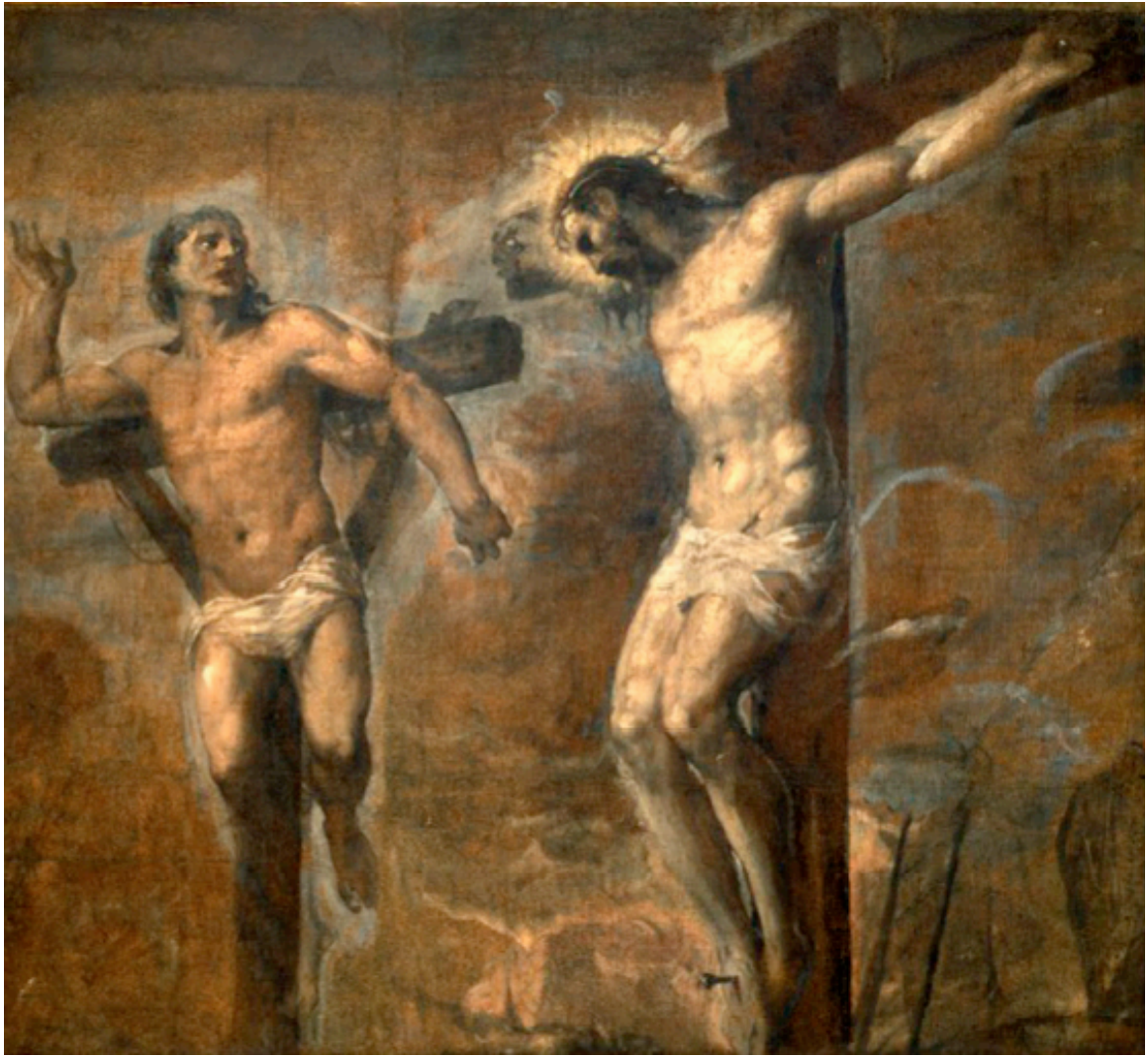
Father, forgive us when we don't know what we're doing and, by your grace, be even more merciful when we do.

Amen.

Artwork: Crucifixion (Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice) – Jacopo Tintoretto

Music: St. Matthew Passion – Johann Sebastian Bach
("Kommt Ihr Töchter, Helft Mir Klagen")

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwVW1ttVhuQ>)



Christ and the Good Thief
(Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna)
Tiziano Vecelli ('Titian')

The Second Word:

A Word of Salvation (Luke 23:43)

*One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, **"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."***

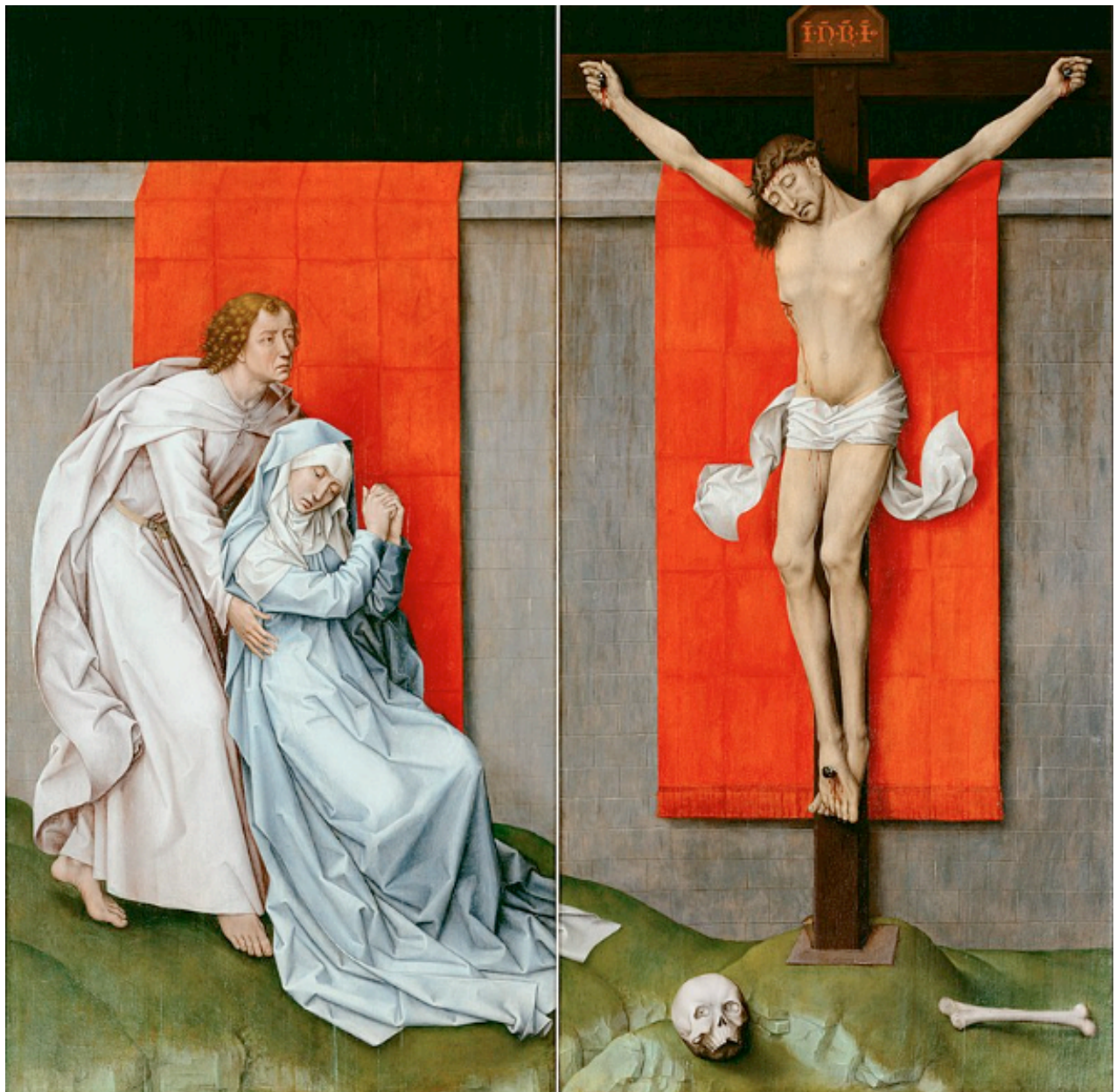
Meditation

Prayer

**Almighty God, help us see that the paradise we seek can only be found in the open arms of your Son.
Amen.**

Artwork: Christ and the Good Thief (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna) – Tiziano Vecelli ('Titian')

Music: Lord, I Need You - Matt Maher
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaVPupbNFAo>)



Christ on the Cross with St. Mary and St. John
(Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)
Rogier van der Weyden

The Third Word:

A Word of Compassion (John 19:26)

*Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "**Dear woman, here is your son,**" and to the disciple, "**Here is your mother.**" From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.*

Meditation

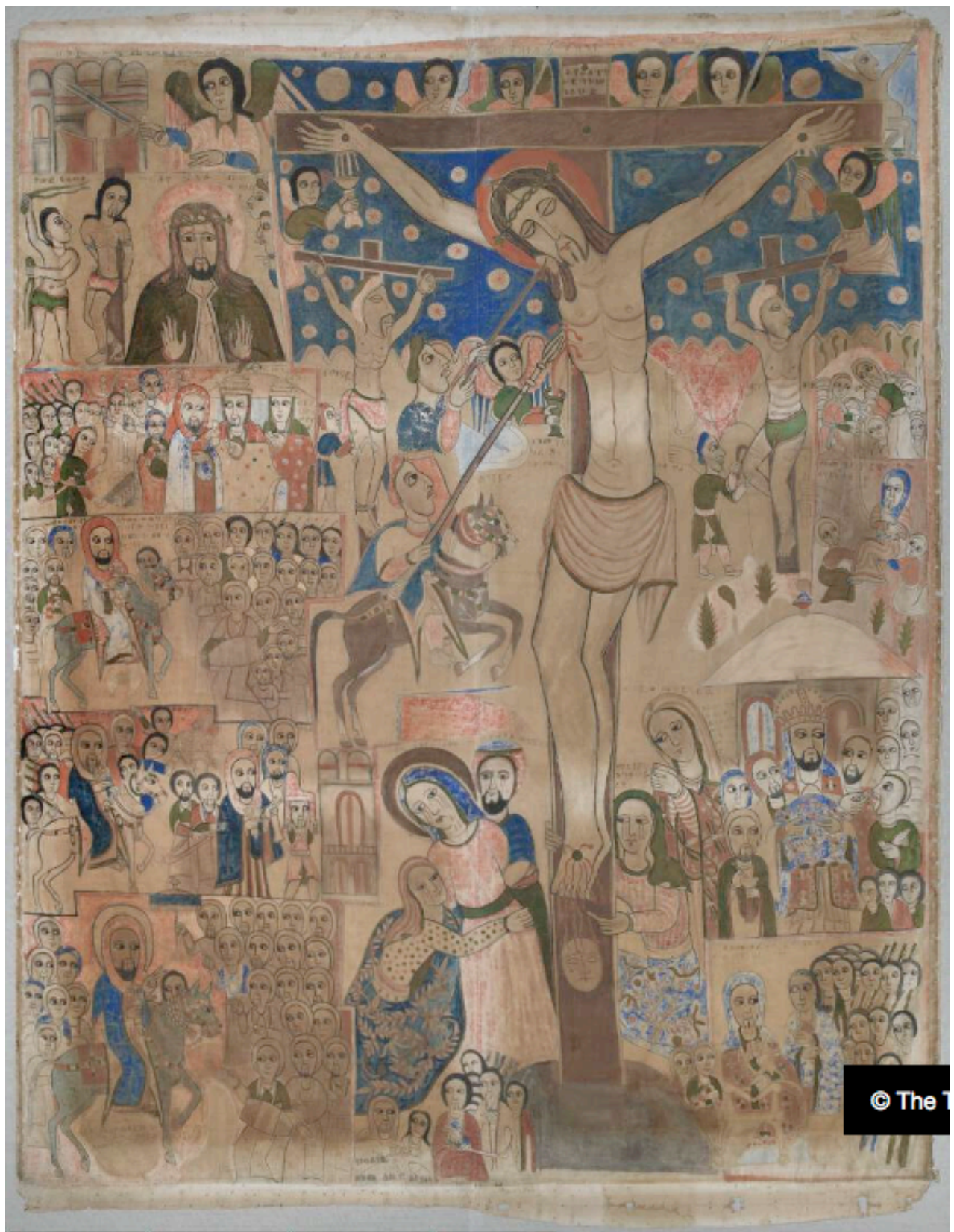
Prayer

Holy God, may we be as mothers and sons to each other, living out Jesus' call from the cross to care for each other as a family bonded together by your love. Amen.

Artwork: Christ on the Cross with St. Mary and St. John (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) – Rogier van der Weyden

Music: Stabat Mater – Giovanni Palestrina

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gz9o-wF7RoU>)



Crucifixion
(Ethiopian origin - British Museum Collections)

The Fourth Word:

A Word of Anguish (John 19:28)

*Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “**I am thirsty.**”*

Meditation

Prayer

Giving God, who poured out his blood so that we might never be thirsty, help us to see the needs of others and attend to them, as Christ has done for us.

Amen.

Artwork: Crucifixion (Ethiopian origin - British Museum Collections)

Music: The Seven Last Words of Christ – Sonata V, “I Thirst” - Joseph Haydn

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msaTIEvvlHg>)



Crucifixion
(Tate Collection)
Graham Sutherland

The Fifth Word:

A Word of Abandonment (Matthew 27:46)

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" - which means,
"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Meditation

Prayer

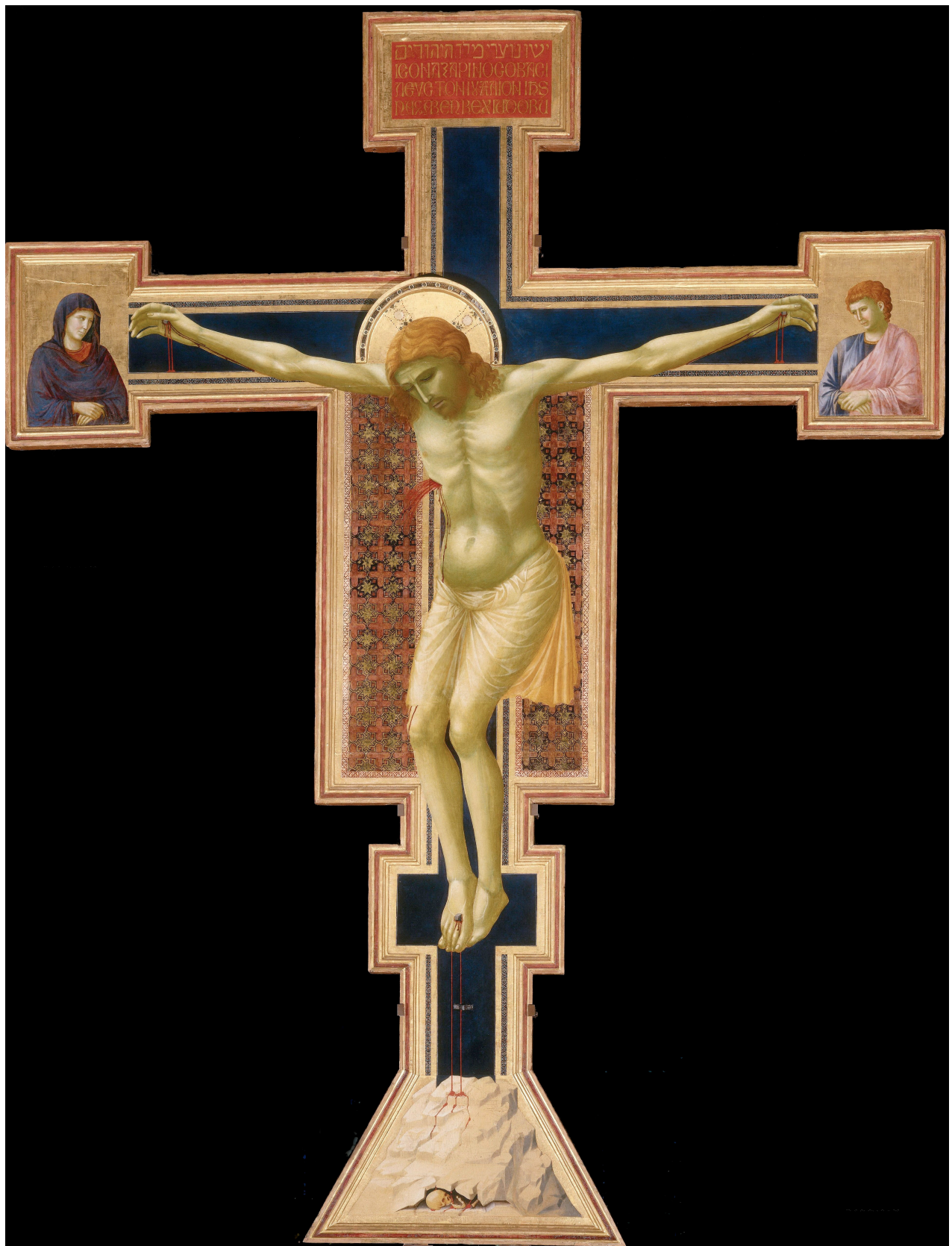
Merciful God, you conquered death. Help us to cry out "my God" even when we feel forsaken. Remind us that you never leave our side, even in the darkest of times.

Amen.

Artwork: Crucifixion – Graham Sutherland (Tate Collection)

Music: Passio: IV. Tunc ergo tradidit eis illum ut crucifigeretur - Arvo Pärt

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dH3bkVapmGo&t=3560>)



Santa Maria Novella Crucifix
Giotto di Bondone

The Sixth Word:

A Word of Accomplishment (John 19:30)

*“A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, **“It is finished.”** With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”*

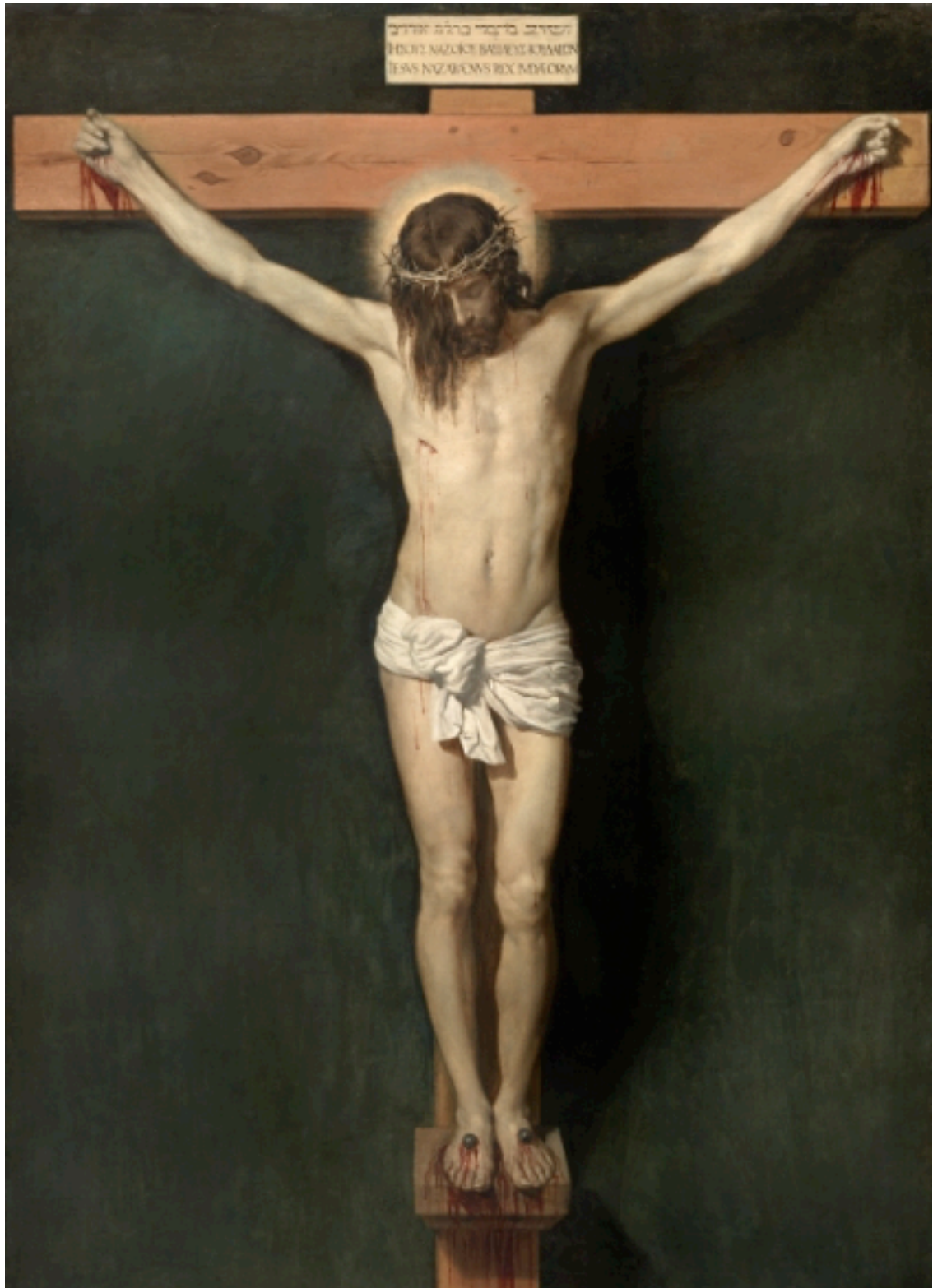
Meditation

Prayer

God of all life, by your power and majesty bring to completion the work you have called us to do; may we walk with you the way of the cross, and beyond. Amen.

Artwork: Santa Maria Novella Crucifix – Giotto di Bondone

Music: How Deep the Father’s Love - Stuart Townend
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzQj7XvKFmA>)



Christ Crucified
(Museo del Prado, Madrid)
Diego Velasquez

The Seventh Word:

A Word of Reunion (Luke 23:46)

*It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, “**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.**” When he had said this, he breathed his last.*

Meditation

Prayer

**Loving God, thank you for opening your arms to receive us. We commit ourselves to you this day, as we accept the gift of life offered by your son, Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Artwork: Christ Crucified – Diego Velasquez (Museo del Prado, Madrid)

Music: Crucifixus – Antonio Lotti
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89shqLBkDvw>)