

# SACRED MOMENTS OF GRACE

## PURPOSE AND SITUATION OF THE ROLLO

Once we have begun our spiritual journey by accepting Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, there is no limit to the variety of ways God visits us. God comes and will come to us when and where He wills! However, over the centuries, the community of faith has accepted certain ‘rites’ or events for corporate celebration and individual spiritual renewal. These “**SACRED MOMENTS OF GRACE**”, as Tres Dias has chosen to call them, are those human experiences that we participate in with ritual and symbolic action, in which God’s grace touches us with blessings in very special ways.

This rollo may be the most challenging talk to prepare and to present on the Weekend because it is *both* a teaching and a witnessing rollo. It should be both inclusive and respectful of all Christian churches. A *key element* in the rollo is the emphasis on *God’s action*. Its primary purpose is to explain, simply and practically, how these Sacred Moments are signs of God’s love in action, and how they reveal and bring this grace to Christians.

This rollo calls for:

- A presentation by the Spiritual Director(s) of the talk in such a way as to encourage spiritual unity in the entire Christian community;
- Biblical, theological, and practical understanding of the “**Sacred Moments of Grace**”;
- Recognition that the nature and number of these “**Sacred Moments of Grace**” are different in the various denominations/churches;
- The Spiritual Director to use language or illustrations that are inclusive and not critical of the traditions of other Christians.

**Sacred Moments of Grace** is a subject about which the laity is usually minimally informed. They invariably respond with enthusiasm to teaching which instructs and informs them, and which illustrates and highlights the *similarities* among the various traditions. Some theological terms will be required; these should be simply defined. For the most part, language should be used which can be readily understood by the layperson.

Because Tres Dias is an inter-denominational Weekend, the way the rollo is presented, and the manner in which worship and liturgies are conducted will demonstrate to the candidates how Christian unity can be expressed and experienced. It is certainly neither the calling nor the purpose of Tres Dias to change the institutional church or to attempt to bring the various denominations/churches together in a corporate way. As stated in “The Essentials” (Item 2.0.2), it is important that we “**stress those things which the Christian denominations have in common and respect those things which are different**”.

Some on the Weekend will be receiving Holy Communion for the first time in a way different from their own tradition. It could affect the participants’ view toward Communion by giving them a deeper understanding of its spiritual importance. They may recognize more fully, the significance of this sacred act. The attitude of the candidates regarding the beliefs and practices of other persons with respect to Holy Communion may also change, with their eyes possibly being opened to different views.

The **Sacred Moments of Grace** rollo may be presented in dialogue by two Spiritual Directors. This permits illustration of different traditions and shows that unity in Christ does not require unanimity of doctrine or of all spiritual concepts.

Visual aids may be used, as they make it easier for the candidates to take notes and make an outline of the main points.

As you begin to write this rollo, stop and pray, asking the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind to what He would have you share regarding His “**Sacred Moments of Grace**”; also, that He would teach you through the study of the Scriptures and various other Christian materials, how to gain a better understanding of the beliefs and practices of other Christian traditions. **The Lord is with you!**

*(During this talk, some communities may hold a chapel meditation using a description of Jesus’ death. See “Appendix to the Sacred Moments of Grace Rollo, The Crucifixion” after the Commentary on the Outline)*

*(During or following this talk, a celebration of Holy Communion will be held in accordance with “The Tres Dias Essentials”).*

Time objective (for the talk itself): Should not exceed **60** minutes

# **SACRED MOMENTS OF GRACE**

## **OUTLINE**

- I. Introduction**
- II. God's grace revealed in New Life**
- III. God's grace revealed in the empowerment of the Holy Spirit**
- IV. God's grace revealed in Forgiveness and Reconciliation**
- V. God's grace revealed in Healing**
- VI. God's grace revealed in Marriage**
- VII. God's grace revealed in the Call to Ministry**
- VIII. God's grace revealed in Communion**
- IX. Conclusion: Sacred Moments of Grace are God's Gifts**

# SACRED MOMENTS OF GRACE

## COMMENTARY ON THE OUTLINE

(This material is intended as a study aid for the Rollista. It is not intended to be the rollo.)

### I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these **Sacred Moments of Grace** includes the following: to convey God's love to us, and through us, to others; to sanctify, to strengthen, to heal and direct our relationship with God and with each other. They are to build us up (edify) and to renew us in the community of believers. They are corporate as well as individual events. They are acts and actions of worship in which we praise and give glory to God.

Within the Christian community, there are special ways in which we encounter God's love and grace in Jesus Christ. Terms generally used for these **Sacred Moments** include Sacraments, Ordinances, Covenants, Church Rites, Means of Grace or Signs of Grace. What they are called is not so important as God's grace and action, which is present in and with them. Inasmuch as Tres Dias is an inter-denominational movement, it is important to share these various terms by which these "**Sacred Moments of Grace**" may be known within the larger Christian community:

These "**Sacred Moments of Grace**" are meant to unite and strengthen the Body of Christ. While there are many different beliefs and teachings regarding them, this rollo should treat these differences within the context of **Tres Dias** as an intensive Weekend of teaching and experiencing God's unmerited grace. (Remember, its original name, Cursillo de Cristiandad, literally translates to "a short course in Christianity".) The rollista should concentrate on using definitions and references from the Bible.

- **Define Sacred Moments of Grace.** Sacred Moments of Grace may be defined as a "Sacrament" (see footnote 1), or as a sign. The classical definition as "*an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace*" may be helpful. Some examples may be given from popular experience on how signs function (signal, signify, etc). There should be illustrations from the Scriptures on how signs are disclosures of God's presence and power to the believer. (See references throughout the Gospels, especially in John).
- **Grace is God's Action.** In all of these "Sacred Moments", it is imperative to keep in mind that *the most important aspect is God's action*. He is working in these situations to express His love to and for the benefit of the people of God, who are the recipients of His love, grace, and kindness. This rollo needs to be strongly God-focused. It is His grace coming to His people at special, sacred times through His sacred acts or signs.

### II. GOD'S GRACE REVEALED IN NEW LIFE

Paul writes, "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*" 2 Cor. 5:17 (NIV). When we receive Jesus Christ into our lives as Savior and Lord, God's grace is revealed in the gift of salvation, i.e. reconciliation to God and renewal of the spirit.

Biblical Example: The Philippian Jailer, Acts 16:25-34

- **Baptism** – The sign by which the ‘community of faith’ acknowledges and celebrates a person’s ‘new creation’ is the water of baptism. In fact, baptism is one’s spiritual birthday celebration.

There are several images, which apply to baptism in the New Testament:

- ◊ being united with Christ, his death and resurrection – Romans 6:3,4
- ◊ being incorporated into the church, sharing in the Body of Christ – Galatians 3:26-28, 1 Cor.12:3
- ◊ being born again and regenerated – John 3:5
- ◊ being forgiven of your sins, cleansing of conscience – Acts 2:38, 1 Pet. 3:21
- ◊ being enlightened and receiving the Holy Spirit – Acts 2:38.

Baptism is ordinarily done publicly in a congregation (see footnote 2). Each time the community witnesses it and gives witness to it “their own baptism is recalled and their faith is nourished” (Martin Luther).

### III. GOD’S GRACE REVEALED IN THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **Confirmation.** This Sacred Moment is traditionally called the sacrament of strengthening (by the Holy Spirit), by the believers confirming their baptismal vows and by the affirmation of the Christian community. Some traditions require the presence of a bishop at confirmation. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit is invoked, usually with the laying on (imposition) of hands and sometimes with the use of oil. The public act is celebrated after a period of instruction by church leaders (Romans 10:9-10; 2 Tim. 1:6,7; 1 Tim. 6:11).
- **Power for Life.** The Holy Spirit empowers the believer for living the Christian life (Eph. 5:18). The Holy Spirit desires to lead believers to submit to Christ’s lordship and to grow in discipleship (Galatians 5:16-18, 25, Romans 12:1-2, Galatians 2:20). The power for living the Christian life is the power of the Holy Spirit.

### IV. GOD’S GRACE REVEALED IN FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

This Sacred Moment of Grace acknowledges human sinfulness that disrupts our relationships with God and others. God’s response is seen in Jesus’ atonement on the cross, opening the way for our forgiveness and reconciliation through His grace. The human response includes:

- **Repentance;** being convicted of one’s sin, acknowledging the need for forgiveness and deciding to change; this change is in mind, heart, and action. (Matt.4:17)
- **Confession;** verbal admission, confessing to God and to each other (James 5:16); agreement with God about sin (what God calls sin, I call sin)
- **Hearing and Accepting Forgiveness;** understanding and hearing from the Word of God and perhaps from another Christian that, “God forgives you!” (John 20:23)

- **Reconciliation;** restoration of a relationship and a change in behavior. The need for this on-going reconciliation is described in such passages as 1 John 1:5-9.
  - ◊ Traditionally, this event may be done in several different ways, such as:
  - ◊ private counseling sessions,
  - ◊ private confession with a priest or pastor,
  - ◊ public worship, e.g. corporate confession, absolution or pardon, etc. (John 20:19-23).

This Sacred Moment is an on-going part of our Christian walk, as we continually seek to restore broken relationships and grow in grace.

Biblical Example: The woman caught in adultery (John 8:10-11; 1 John 1:9)

## V. GOD'S GRACE REVEALED IN HEALING

This Sacred Moment of Grace is based upon Jesus' healing ministry that was, physical, emotional, and spiritual. He empowered his disciples/followers to continue this ministry (Luke 9:1-6 and 10:9). Jesus continues this ministry through the Christian community (James 5:14-15). It may include practices such as intercessory prayers, anointing (usually with olive oil), laying on of hands, etc.

The New Testament teaches that God's will for us is for wholeness and wellness of body, mind and spirit:

- **Physically**, we pray for restoration of bodily health.
- **Emotionally**, we pray for relief from anxiety, depression, fear, and stress.
- **Spiritually**, we pray for forgiveness, patience, strengthening of the soul, recommitment, and joy in suffering.
- **Relationally**, we pray for the healing of broken relationships.
- **In terminal situations**, we pray for God's sustaining grace as the person approaches death. And we rejoice that, upon death, eternal and triumphal healing occurs

Biblical example: Jesus came to minister to the whole person (Luke 4:18-19)

## VI. GOD'S GRACE REVEALED IN MARRIAGE

- **Covenant in Christ between a Man and a Woman (Oneness).** Marriage is a holy covenant in Christ between a man and a woman, affirming their God-given oneness. In a Christian wedding, couples are required to declare life-long fidelity to each other in the presence of a Christian community, i.e. witnesses, and before God. God joins the couple together into one flesh (Matt. 19:5, 6). The officiator announces the marriage and prays for God's blessing upon the couple. Most church marriages are complete acts of worship, often including the celebration of Communion.

Jesus blessed a wedding by his presence at Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11). Paul discusses marriage in the context of love and respect between spouses, honoring their

God-given roles and submission to Christ (Eph.5:21-33). While the marriage covenant is made within the ceremony itself, the marriage relationship is intended to be mutually edifying and a lifelong source of special experiences of God's grace. Marriage also pictures the relationship between Christ and the church. The marriage relationship is intended to be mutually edifying and a lifelong source of experiencing God's grace together.

Biblical examples: Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11, also Gen. 2:18-25)

- **Blessing of Children.** It is God's plan that man should be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28, 9:1 and 35:11). The blessing of children presents new opportunities for sharing God's grace within the family. God wants children to be brought to Him (Matt. 19:14, 15) and also to be taught His decrees and laws (Deut. 4:9). Grandchildren are a crown to the aged; the parents are the pride of their children (Prov. 17:6).
- **Affirm those who are Single.** On a Weekend, there may be many who are unmarried. It is both loving and appropriate to speak a word indicating that a call to be single is neither inferior nor superior to marriage (I Cor. 7:32-35). Jesus refers to singleness as a gift. It is "given" to some. Some choose to remain single (Matt.19:10-12).

Because a number of people on the Weekend will likely be separated or divorced, the rollista should recognize their presence and their special need for grace. Words affirming forgiveness, reconciliation, and new beginnings are desirable. The rollista will want to acknowledge that there are different views within the Christian community about divorce and re-marriage (consider providing an illustration of the relationship Jesus has with His Bride, the Church).

## VII. GOD'S GRACE REVEALED IN THE CALL TO MINISTRY

- **Priesthood of all believers.** Through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, all believing Christians have equal access to God's presence and grace; they also have the power and authority to intercede with God on behalf of others (1 Peter 2:5,9). General Ministry – All baptized Christians have a witness and mission for Jesus within the community and in the world. We are called to use our unique gifts to serve God in the church and beyond the church (Eph.4:11-16).
- **Ordained Ministry.** Some are called to serve by continuing the spiritual leadership of Jesus (Eph. 4:11-12). They are called by God and set apart by the church and/or the congregation for the specialized ministry of preaching and teaching (Word), celebrating these Sacred Moments of Grace (Sacrament), and equipping laity for ministry, exercising pastoral oversight, and administering the disciplines of the church (Order). In ordination, the congregation affirms the person's call, invokes the empowering of the Holy Spirit (usually with the laying on of hands and prayer) and authorizes the ministry (1 Tim. 4:11-14).

*(The Spiritual Director may wish to give a personal witness, noting the support given and needed from his/her family and from the congregation)*

Biblical examples: Calling of the Disciples (Matt. 4:18-22); Calling of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5)

### **VIII. GOD’S GRACE REVEALED IN COMMUNION**

Christian churches use several terms to refer to this Sacred Moment of Grace: Eucharist, Communion, Holy Communion, The Lord’s Supper, The Mass, and Divine Liturgy. All refer to the holy act in which we share in the breaking of bread (the Body of Christ) and the drinking of the cup (the Blood of Christ).

There are several biblical images relating to Communion:

- **joyful sense of thanksgiving** (Eucharist) –Acts 2:46;
- **the communion fellowship** – 1 Corinthians 10:16;
- **commemoration, remembrance of Jesus and His sacrifice for us** -1 Corinthians 11:24-26;
- **the real presence of Christ** – Matt. 26:26-28 and I Cor. 10:16, 17 and 11:23-29.

John Calvin said, “How we feed on Christ is a mystery too lofty for either my mind to comprehend or my words to declare... I rather experience than understand it.” Some would understand that in Holy Communion, we encounter the Risen Christ, as the disciples did on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).

There is general agreement in the Christian community regarding the two dimensions when receiving Communion: one is the vertical relationship with the Father; the other is the horizontal relationship with the Body of Christ, the Church (I Cor. 10:16-17; I Cor. 11:27-29).

Note: It is also recognized that there are two traditional views within the churches about Holy Communion as a sign of unity (1 Cor.11:29): that it expresses a unity in Christ which already exists among baptized Christians of common order and belief; that it is a basic means toward achieving unity in Christ yet to be disclosed among the churches (1 Cor. 10:17).

*In practice, Tres Dias seeks to bridge these classic positions. However, the Spiritual Director needs to be sensitive to the fact that some on the Weekend might choose not to receive Holy Communion because of personal or denominational reasons.*

Biblical example: Jesus “eagerly desired” to meet His disciples in Communion (Luke 22:15)

### **IX. CONCLUSION**

These Sacred Moments of Grace are gifts given by God for the strengthening, edification, and spiritual renewal in the local church and in the individual Christian. Our lives have been enriched by the grace of God. Now let’s serve Him!

*(During this talk, some communities may hold a chapel meditation using a description of Jesus’ death.)*



(During or following this talk, a celebration of Holy Communion will be held in accordance with “The Tres Dias Essentials”.)

**Note to the rollista:** *There is far more subject matter in this “Commentary . . .” than is required to meet the time objective of the rollo. While it is necessary to speak very briefly on each item listed in the outline, be careful to select for expansion, only those items for which you have something significant to contribute - - usually through personal experience. Remember, the more important part of the Weekend will occur during table discussions than what participants will learn or remember from hearing the rollo. The rollo is meant more to spark ideas for the table discussions than it is meant to be instructive.*

Time objective (for the talk itself): Should not exceed **60** minutes

ROLLO SACRED MOMENTS OF GRACE 10/7/2004

### **Footnotes:**

- 1.) **Historical Perspective.** *Regarding the term “Sacraments”, it was Tertullian, writing around the year 210 A.D., who first used the Latin word “sacramentum” in a Christian sense. Tertullian explained that it was a covenant with God, similar to the sacramentum (oath of allegiance or covenant) administered to Roman recruits when they entered the army. Largely because of Tertullian’s influence on other writers, sacramentum became used as a general term for the Christian ceremony of initiation, which at that time, included baptism, laying on of hands and participation in the Eucharistic meal. It would be a mistake to suppose that at such a point in history, the sacraments were equivalent to the current meaning of Eastern Orthodox, Armenian, Roman Catholic, or Anglican sacraments.*

*Over time, from as early as the fifth century, other rites were added which were generally considered to be sacraments. However, there were wide variations and beliefs with respect to these. It was not until the Reformation when Martin Luther and other reformers challenged the Roman church’s position on the number of sacraments (and many other issues), that the Roman church re-examined its position. At the Council of Trent (1545 to 1563), the Roman church cemented its belief regarding the number and meaning of sacraments; seven were established: **Baptism, Holy Communion, Confirmation, Penance, Ordination, Marriage, and Extreme Unction** (anointing). However, the meaning of the sacraments continued to change in the various churches, including in the Roman church, since then and as recent as the 1950’s.*

*In the meantime, most Protestant churches developed and held to their belief that there were only two sacraments (**Baptism and Holy Communion**), while also recognizing the other five as important events in the lives of Christians and worthy of celebration or administering in their churches. Even in the various Protestant churches, there have been, from the time of the Reformation and continuing today, major differences with regard to how they understand, view and practice the two sacraments, as well as the other church rites (celebrations). However, whether recognized officially as a sacrament or not, all seven **Sacred Moments** are widely practiced in Christian churches.*

- 2.) *Because of this principle, having baptisms on Weekends is strongly discouraged. Spiritual Directors are encouraged to direct requests for baptisms to the candidate’s local congregation.*

## **Appendix to the Sacred Moments of Grace Rollo**

### **The Crucifixion**

The first day in the life of any Christian began 2000 years ago.

Have you ever stopped to think of the personal suffering and agony that Christ experienced for you and for me?

I'm not talking about the cross only...but before He got to the cross.

There are some people who accuse Christ of being a weakling because He fell as He was carrying His cross. Have you ever stopped to consider what Christ went through before He got to the cross?

After His arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas, the High Priest; it was here that the first physical trauma was inflicted.

A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiaphas. The palace guards then blindfolded Him and mockingly taunted Him to identify them as they each passed by, spat on Him and struck Him in the face.

In the early morning Jesus, battered and bruised, dehydrated, and exhausted from a sleepless night, is taken across Jerusalem to Pontius Pilate.

You are, of course, familiar with Pilate's action in attempting to pass responsibility to Herod. Jesus apparently suffered no physical mistreatment at the hands of Herod and was returned to Pilate.

It was then, in response to the cries of the mob, that Pilate ordered Barabbas released and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion

Many scholars believe that Pilate originally ordered Jesus scourged as his full punishment and that the death sentence by crucifixion came only in response to the taunt by the mob that Pilate was not properly defending Caesar against this pretender who claimed to be the King of the Jews.

Preparations for the scourging are carried out.

The prisoner is stripped of His clothing, and His hands tied to a post above His head.

The Roman legionnaire steps forward with a short whip in his hand.

This short whip consists of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each.

A heavy whip is brought down with full force again...and again...and again...and again across Jesus' shoulders, his back and his legs at least 39 times.

At first the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting bleeding from vessels from the underlying muscles.

The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises, which are broken open by subsequent blows.

Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue.

When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped.

The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood.

The Roman soldiers see a great joke in this provincial Jew claiming to be a King. They throw a robe across His shoulders and place a stick in His hand for a scepter. They still need a crown to make their travesty complete.

A small bundle of flexible branches covered with long thorns (commonly used for firewood) are plaited into a shape of a crown, and this is pressed into His scalp. Again there is copious bleeding.

After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers take the stick from His hand and strike Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp.

Finally, they tire of their sadistic sport and the robe is torn from His back.

This had already become adherent to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds, and its removal, just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage causes excruciating pain...almost as though He were again being whipped.....and the wounds again begin to bleed. In difference to Jewish custom, the Romans return His garments.

The heavy cross beam of the cross is tied across His shoulders, and the procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves and the execution detail of Roman soldiers, headed by a centurion begins its slow journey along the Via Dolorosa.

In spite of His efforts to walk erect, the weight of the heavy wooden beam, together with the shock produced by copious blood loss, is too much.

He stumbles and falls.

The rough wood of the beam gouges into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. He tries to rise, but the human muscles have been pushed beyond their endurance.

The centurion, anxious to get on with the crucifixion, selects a stalwart North African onlooker, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross.

Jesus follows, still bleeding and sweating the cold, clammy sweat of shock.

The 650-yard journey from the fortress to Golgotha is finally completed.

The prisoner is again stripped of His clothes, except for a loincloth, which is allowed the Jews. The crucifixion begins.

Simon is ordered to place the cross beam on the ground and Jesus is quickly thrown backward with His shoulders against the wood.

The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist.

He drives a heavy, square, wrought iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. (*nail strike – 2 or 3 times*).

Quickly he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. (*nail strike – 2 or 3 times*).

The cross beam is then lifted in place at the top of the cross and the title reading “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews!” is nailed in place.

The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. (*nail strike–2-3 times*).

The victim is now crucified.

As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain --- the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves.

As He pushes Himself upward to avoid the stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet.

Again, there is a searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

At this point, another phenomenon occurs.

As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps swell over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain.

With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward.

Hanging by His arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostals muscles are unable to act.

Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled.  
Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath.

Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside.

Spasmodically, He is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen.

It was during these periods that He uttered the seven short sentences:

Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.  
To the penitent thief: Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.  
To John (the beloved apostle): Behold thy mother,  
And to Mary, His mother: Woman, behold thy son.

Then the cry from the beginning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm:

My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me?

Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rendering cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down again the rough timber ---

Then another agony begins ---

A deep, crushing pain deep in the chest as the chest cavity slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

It is now almost over ---

The loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level – the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues.

The tortured lungs are making frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air.

The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain.

Jesus gasps His fifth cry --- I thirst.

A sponge soaked in cheap, sour wine, which was the staple drink of the Roman legionnaires, is lifted to His lips.

He apparently doesn't take any of the liquid.

The body of Jesus is now in extremis, and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues.

This realization brings out His sixth words – possibly little more than a whisper:

It is finished.

His mission of atonement has been completed.

Finally, He can allow His body to die.

With one last surge of strength, He once again presses His torn feet against the nail, straightens His legs, takes a deeper breath, and utters His seventh and last cry:

Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.

-----PAUSE-----

(Silent Meditation)

Song: Were You There