

John 19:26-27

We're not specifically told that Joseph was dead, but we certainly do draw that conclusion. He was not mentioned at the wedding of Cana. He was not mentioned throughout Jesus three-year ministry. And he is not with Mary beneath the cross of Jesus. And so when Jesus looks down and sees His mother standing there, He has compassion for her—her husband no longer by her side. His beloved disciple, John, is standing with her, and Jesus puts His mother into the care of His dear friend. "Woman," He says, "behold your son." And to John, "Behold your mother."

Our compassionate Savior. The way He showed love to His mother even as He was dying says much about Him. But there's something you should know. He was not showing love to His mother when He spoke those tender words. When He placed Mary into the care of John, Jesus by that action, was not thinking of His mother in His dying hours, He was thinking of you. He was showing compassion to you. His words to His mother were directed not so much toward her as they were toward you.

Yes He loved her. No one loved her more than He. But there comes a time in a man's life when his love for his mother takes second place. There comes a time when another love takes priority over love for his mother. From the very beginning this has been so. For God made them male and female, "and a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

When Jesus said "Woman, behold your son," He was not loving His mother, He was loving you. For He was leaving His "father and mother" to become one flesh with you, His beloved Bride. On the cross as your Savior was dying we behold the marriage of Christ and His Bride, the Church.

It could take place in no other way. For as the first Adam slept in the Garden, out of his side God brought forth the woman, and He brought her to the man to be his wife. And Adam named her Eve, for she was the mother of all the living.

And as Jesus fell asleep in the arms of death, out of His pierced side flowed blood and water, the sacraments of Baptism and Communion, which create and sustain His Church. Out of this second Adam's side, as He slept in death, we see God bringing forth she who became the Bride of Christ. And He loved her. And her name is also Eve, for the Church is the Mother of all those who live in Jesus.

You are Christ's Bride. And as Eve came from Adam's side, so God brought you from the side of your Savior. For it was the water from His side that gave you life in your Baptism. And it is the blood from His side that sustains your life in Holy Communion.

And as Adam loved Eve so Christ loves you. He takes you for His holy Bride not because you are lovable; rather, He makes you the lovely Bride that you are. When a man and woman join together and become one flesh, a blessed exchange takes place. They give themselves and all that they are and have to each other. And so when Christ became one flesh with His Church He, as her divine Husband, gave Himself and all that He had to her.

His holiness and innocence He gave to you. His perfect life of obedience is yours. His lifeblood He gave for you. He held nothing back. All that He could give He gave to His Bride. On the cross He gave Himself, and in the water and blood of His Sacraments, these gifts of the cross from His blessed side, are yours.

And what did you give to Him in this exchange? All that you had to give. The only thing that you could give. He took your sins. He took what was filthy and rotten about you and gave to you what is holy and lovely. He exchanged His righteousness for your disobedience. His life for your death. His innocence for your guilt. His holiness for your judgment. Everything good about Him is joined to you. Everything wrong about you is joined to Him. “And what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

Since Christ took your sins you can't have them back. They cannot trouble you. They cannot haunt you. They cannot cause you to doubt God's love for you. They cannot prevent you from entering into heaven, because they do not belong to you. Jesus took them from you when He made you His Bride.

The devil tempts you to not believe this. He would have you look at your sins. He would have you look at all your disobedience before God. And he would have you believe that you are too rotten for God to love; too filthy with sin for God to forgive. Do not believe him. He would divorce you from your Savior. But what God has joined together no one is to separate.

Your divine Husband looks upon you in loving grace. He does not see your wrongs, they are cleansed. He sees you as a husband sees his new bride—dressed in white, pure, holy, innocent, without stain or blemish. The whiteness and purity of His life is laid upon you. As Adam looked at Eve when God brought her to him, so Christ looks upon you in love.

And as Adam said of her, she is “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” so Christ also speaks of you. He calls you His Body; His flesh. For you are what you eat, and receiving His flesh and blood for you, you are the Body of Christ, His Church.

“Woman,” Jesus said, “behold your son.” And to John, “Behold your mother.” With these few words Jesus left His mother to join Himself to you. And yet in leaving her, she too, would be joined to Jesus; not as His mother, but as His Bride. For in trusting in Him as her Savior, she too, was a member of His Bride, the Church.

And as you look around this room you see that Bride of Christ. Souls for whom He died. Members of His Body joined to Him by the water and blood from His side. This side of heaven Christ's Bride may not look stunningly beautiful. This side of heaven Christ's Bride may look weak and utterly sinful. Do not be deceived by what your eyes see. Christ's Bride is radiant. Christ's Bride is beautiful, because you, His Bride, are forgiven. In the eyes of your divine Husband you are holy and blameless. Let us then, trust not our eyes, but the Word of Christ who has made us the beautiful Bride we are. Amen.