

Helping people when we don't feel like it is a special sign of charity. If you aren't feeling well, but you still have to feed the kids, you will provide for them in spite of your suffering. If you are embarrassed about your debt, your job, your family, or how you look today, but a friend of yours needs help and advice right now, you will put aside your own feelings and reach out with compassion.

Nobody did this better than Jesus on the cross. It is hard to imagine a more punishing death than the crucifixion he endured. But in the midst of it all, he still provided for the people he loved. In John's gospel, Jesus speaks 3 times from the cross. First he entrusts his mother and the disciple whom he loved into each other's care; he provides for their physical and spiritual needs. Then he says, "I thirst." It's not just that his throat is dry; he is thirsty for the glory of God. Finally, he says, "It is finished." He has completed his work.

His words are over, but then the dead Jesus does two more things on the cross. First, John says, "He handed over his spirit." We sometimes hear this translated as, "He breathed his last." The last breath of Jesus is not when he inhales, but when he exhales and breathes out his spirit into the world. Then, later, a soldier thrusts his lance into the side of the dead Jesus, and John says, "Immediately blood and water flowed out." John goes out of his way to tell us that this really happened, there was an eyewitness to it, and the testimony is given for our benefit. The water and blood signify baptism and communion, the two sacraments that put us at the service of Jesus. The physical body of Jesus died, but he remains with us; this is clear from his death, even before we hear what happened on Easter Sunday morning.

Helping people when we don't feel like it is a special sign of charity. In the midst of suffering, Jesus helped his mother, the disciple whom he loved, and the entire Church by handing over his Spirit and pouring out the sacraments from his wounded side. We don't always feel like serving others, but Christ has given us a model, and he gives us strength, so that we can be in those trying times a special sign of charity.