

SEVEN LAST WORDS
& EIGHT WORDS
OF EASTER

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*Meditations for
Your Journey to Pentecost*

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SEVEN LAST WORDS & EIGHT WORDS OF EASTER

Meditations for Your Journey to Pentecost

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INTRODUCTION

Being deeply formed in the liturgical dimensions of Christian faith, I have long noticed that the church pays fervent attention to the forty days of Lent. People with incredibly busy and overscheduled lives carve out time for the evening Lenten prayer group, or the weekly “Soup and Stations” on the Friday nights of Lent. We are good at almsgiving, fasting, and prayer.

In short, we do Lent well.

Holy Week, and especially those three holiest of days, beginning with the Thursday evening Supper of

the Lord and culminating with the ringing Alleluias of Easter morning, brings people repeatedly back to church—and sometimes brings people back to *the* church, and to the discovery of a new and living faith.

But what about those eight weeks—fifty days—of Easter? That is a very long stretch, even for the most devout. Are we spiritually spent by the time we sing that last Alleluia of Easter morning? Or do we simply get distracted, as the earth warms and those longer days give us the gardener's itch? Then there are all those distractions around the long season of graduation—from preschool to Ph.D.—along with Mother's Day, Father's Day, and booking reservations for summer vacation.

We get so easily distracted on our journey to Pentecost.

But what *about* those eight weeks of Easter? Traditionally the Jewish celebration of Pentecost, known as Shavuot, came fifty days after Passover, celebrating the spring harvest and the revelation of the Law at Mount Sinai. In Christian faith Pentecost is the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit, as in

“a strong driving wind” and in “tongues as of fire” (Acts 2:2–3).

If Easter was Jesus’ day, Pentecost surely is ours. Pentecost is rightly called “the birthday of the church.” It is the whole point of the journey of Lent and the full revelation of Easter. Indeed, the refrain of the responsorial psalm of Pentecost urges us toward real engagement in God’s greater work: “Lord, send out your Spirit / and renew the face of the earth.”

With Pentecost we realize (if but slowly) that *we*, now filled with the Holy Spirit, are the agents of that renewal in our place and time. The work of “renewing the face of the earth” is our immediate and overarching concern and must shape and animate the very core of our Christian vocation and the church’s mission.

In *Seven Last Words and Eight Words of Easter I* strive to shed light on this journey from Lent to Pentecost. Far from a mere reminiscence of an earlier time, this journey is here and now, a personal and collective journey into the unknown terrain of our

twenty-first century. It is a real journey, guided by the Holy Spirit, that is deeply self-involving and deeply vocational.

God's calling is particular, and it is always a calling to movement, to bold and generous action in the Holy Spirit for the good of this world which God still so loves.

I invite you to not merely read but to linger with, savor, and indeed digest the words within these pages. The important words are Jesus' words. The other words are mine, given to me, actually, to scribe as faithfully as I was able.

Some of these words will confront you with unexpected challenge. And some of these words will offer you unexpected encouragement, consolation, and joy.

All of these words serve as invitation to *you*, to enter more deeply into the mystery of the crucified and risen Lord, God's holy Fool, who taught what he knew, who stood by his words, and who could not back away from God's scandalous outpouring of friendship, kinship, and mercy.

I pray that as you ponder these *Seven Last Words* and *Eight Words of Easter* you will be courageous with the fire of Pentecost to *be* church, to teach what you know is true, to stand by your words, and to never back away from the scandal of God's redeeming love.

Mary Sharon Moore

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