

The Apostle John was there. He was beneath the cross of Jesus. He was there with Jesus' mother. But John was helpless. There was nothing he could do except watch Jesus die. And yet this, in and of itself, was the greatest thing that John could have done. He was an eyewitness. John saw it all. He saw Jesus bow His head and give up His spirit. He was the only apostle who actually saw Jesus die.

But he saw even more. He stayed there and watched as the soldiers broke the legs of the criminals, one on either side of Jesus. John watched as the soldiers peered up at Jesus. They could tell that He wasn't breathing. His body hung lifeless from the cross. But then, just to be certain, one of the soldiers thrust his spear up into Jesus' side. And out of His side flowed blood, yes of course, but more than blood, out of the same wound there came water.

And John tells it just as he saw it. He did not make it up. He makes sure that we know this. John writes: *"There came out blood and water. He who saw it has born witness, his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth."* It's like John is screaming these words at us. "I saw it!" he cries, "With my very eyes I saw both blood and water flow from Jesus' side!" And then he says this, *"That you also may believe."*

Believe? Believe what? That it wasn't just blood. Blood comes out of every wound. There was blood streaming down Jesus' face from the thorns in His head. There was blood coming from the nail wounds in His hands and feet. If you're bleeding, that is just a sign that you are wounded in some way. But blood and water coming out of the cavity by the heart – that is the sign of death.

A sign for us to believe, says John. To believe that Jesus died. That He did not merely faint and pass out on the cross, and that the soldiers were fooled into thinking He was dead when actually He was still alive.

For then we would have no Savior. You see, our Savior came to join us in life, yes, but more, much more, He came to join us in death. To suffer death for us. To be the One who died for all sinners upon the accursed tree.

And so, we thank God for that soldier and his spear. There is no doubt that Jesus died, Scripture confirming this. And friend, if you care to accept it, believe also the great symbolism here, that the water of Holy Baptism and the blood in the cup of Communion flow from our Crucified Savior to us. The Holy Sacraments are not from us to God. They are not ordinances that we obey to render our due obedience to the Lord. The Holy Sacraments flow to us from nothing less than the side of our Crucified Lord Jesus Christ.

Just as God opened the side of Adam to fashion his bride from Adam's rib, so has He opened Jesus' side with the spear to create, from the blood and water, Jesus' beloved bride, His Holy Christian Church.

Your life is not your own. You were bought at a price, the blood and water testifying to this. Out of Jesus' death you are given life. Created in Holy Baptism. Sustained by Holy Communion. Your place is even closer to Jesus than was the Apostle John beneath His cross. Your place is in Jesus' side, within His very wound, up next to His own heart. The water, always upon you; your baptism into Christ never leaving you. His blood, always covering you. Covering all your sins. Forgiving them, forgiving you, you who are placed within Jesus' holy wounds. Amen.