The Church does not cease to listen to Christ's words. She rereads them continually. With the greatest devotion she reconstructs every detail of his life. These words are listened to also by non-Christians. The life of Christ speaks, also, to many who are not capable of repeating with Peter: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." He, the Son of the living God, speaks also as Man: it is his life that speaks, his humanity, his fidelity to the truth, his all-embracing love. Furthermore, his death on the cross speaks — that is to say the inscrutable depth of his suffering and abandonment. The Church never ceases to relive his death on the Cross and his Resurrection, which constitute the content of the Church's daily life. Indeed, it is by the command of Christ himself, her Master, that the Church unceasingly celebrates the Eucharist, finding in it the "fountain of life and holiness," the efficacious sign of grace and reconciliation with God, and the pledge of eternal life. The Church lives in his mystery, draws unwearingly from it and continually seeks ways of bringing this mystery of her Master and Lord to humanity — to the peoples, the nations, the succeeding generations, and every individual human being — as if she were repeating as the Apostle did: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." The Church stays within the sphere of the mystery of the Redemption, which has become the fundamental principle of her life and mission.

— Redemptor Hominis
Pope John Paul II
March 4, 1979

The challenging words of Christ in the Gospel of this day's liturgy, to forgive those who offend us, to forgive them from our hearts, and to forgive even seventy times seven times, become all the more urgent when we consider God's mercy toward us — the forgiveness and reconciliation Christ won for us by His dying and rising.

We have been forgiven, we have been reconciled, we have been redeemed through the blood of the Cross. To gaze upon the Cross is to know the mystery of God's redemptive love. To celebrate the Eucharist is to experience that love anew.

The cross that leads our procession today, the cross that we lift high, calls us to this feast of forgiveness. It calls us to a spirit of unity in the risen Christ and joy in salvation, as we remember God's love and mercy.

This special cross, designed for our liturgy today, will become a gift to the Holy Father following the celebration. It is a gift of the Bishops and the faithful of the State of Louisiana — a reminder to him of his visit among us and his sharing with us in the "fountain of life and holiness" that is the eucharist.

The smaller crosses that will be prepared at the conclusion of the liturgy and which will remain in each of the dioceses of our state will serve us, not simply as mementoes of the Holy Father's visit, but as constant reminders of the all-embracing love of Christ that is our life and our mission.