



Introduction: A phrase that tore open the heavens

“It is finished” (John 19:30).

Three words spoken from the Cross.

Three words that echo in the depths of human history.

Three words that summarize the entire mission of Christ.

Jesus, nailed to the Cross, in agony, betrayed, humiliated, despised... and yet, victorious. In that final moment of His earthly life, with a cry that tore not only the veil of the Temple but also the darkness of sin, the Son of God proclaims: **“It is finished.”**

But what did He mean by this? What has been finished? Why does this phrase remain so relevant and transformative? In this article, I invite you to dive with me into the deepest mystery of our faith: **the mystery of redemption**. We will explore the origin of this expression, its biblical and liturgical background, its theological meaning, and its pastoral power for daily life.

I. What does “It is finished” mean?

The original Greek expression is **τετέλεσται (tetélestai)**, a term that does not merely indicate something has ended, but rather that it has been **brought to completion, to perfection**. It is not a sigh of defeat, but a cry of victory. Jesus does not say “all has failed,” but “the mission the Father gave me, I have fulfilled to the end.”

A cry of fulfillment

Tetélestai was used in various contexts in the Greco-Roman world:

- **In commerce**, to indicate a debt had been fully paid.
- **In religion**, at the conclusion of a sacrifice that had been accepted.
- **In the military**, as a cry of victory after a final battle.
- **In the arts**, to declare a work complete and flawless.

On the Cross, all these meanings converge:

Jesus has paid our debt, offered the perfect sacrifice, conquered sin, and completed the great work of redeeming love.



II. Origin and biblical context

The phrase “It is finished” appears exclusively in the Gospel according to St. John, who strongly emphasizes Jesus’ divinity and His sovereign control over the events of the Passion.

St. John writes:

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), ‘I thirst.’ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to His mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished,’ and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” (John 19:28–30)

This scene echoes **Psalm 22**, which begins with the cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” and ends with a phrase akin to “it is done” or “He has accomplished it.” Jesus cites this Psalm not only to express anguish, but also to reveal that everything was happening according to divine design.

III. A deep theological meaning

1. The fulfillment of the sacrifice

In the Old Testament, the Temple sacrifices were provisional and imperfect. Every year, the high priest had to offer blood for the sins of the people. But on the Cross, Christ offers Himself **once and for all** (cf. Heb 9:12), as the spotless Lamb, fulfilling what the ancient sacrifices only prefigured.

“By one offering He has perfected for all time those who are



| *sanctified.” (Heb 10:14)*

2. Total obedience to the Father

Jesus did not come to do His own will, but the will of the Father (cf. Jn 6:38). His entire life was a gift of obedience, culminating on the Cross. There, in pain and freedom, Jesus surrenders His life to the end.

Obedience is not blind submission, but an act of love. On the Cross we see that **to obey God is to trust fully in His love—even in the dark.**

3. Victory over sin and death

“It is finished” means sin has been conquered, and humanity reconciled with God. Death has been transformed from within. It no longer has the final word.

IV. A pastoral word for today

1. For those who feel everything is lost

Have you ever felt you couldn’t go on? That everything was falling apart? So did Jesus. But He did not give up. On the Cross, even in abandonment, **He trusted that it all had meaning.** And He proclaimed it: “It is finished.”

It’s a word for the suffering, the sick, the defeated. Jesus didn’t avoid the Cross: **He embraced it, lived it, redeemed it.** And you, by uniting your suffering to His, can make your pain redemptive too.

2. For those searching for meaning in life

Many today live without purpose or direction. But Jesus shows us that every life has a mission, a calling, a vocation. To live as He did is to discover that **our life has one goal: to love to the end.** That is fulfillment. That is how we “finish” our own life’s mission.



3. For those who fear death

Christ entered into death to transform it. It is no longer a dark abyss, but a doorway to eternal life. “It is finished” is also a cry of hope: **death does not have the final word**. Christ has conquered it.

V. The liturgy and tradition: remembering what was finished

Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we make present sacramentally the sacrifice of the Cross. Christ’s “It is finished” is renewed in every Mass.

On Good Friday, this phrase takes center stage. The bare altar, the reading of the Passion, the veneration of the Cross—all point to that decisive moment. But not as a defeat, rather as **Christ’s glorious hour**.

The Fathers of the Church saw in these words the consummation of the entire history of salvation. St. Augustine said: “What was foretold by the prophets, prefigured in sacrifices, and awaited by the righteous—has now been fulfilled.”

VI. What now? Living as redeemed children

“It is finished” is not just a phrase to contemplate—it’s a call to live differently:

- **With gratitude:** For we have been loved to the extreme.
- **With trust:** For even in suffering, God has a plan.
- **With mission:** For we, too, have something to “complete” in this life—our calling to holiness.

Christ has done His part. Now it’s our turn to respond with faith, with deeds, with total surrender.



Conclusion: The echo that never fades

That cry from Golgotha was not a whisper of agony, but the **eternal echo of divine love**. “It is finished” is not the end of a tragedy, but the beginning of a new creation. Sin has been forgiven, the veil has been torn, heaven is open.

Today, in the midst of so much crisis, confusion, and suffering, we need to hear that voice again:

Christ has already won. It is finished.

What remains is to live as redeemed children, carrying our cross, but with eyes fixed on the victory.

Do you also want to live that fullness?

Do you want your life to have its own “It is finished”?

Then love like Christ, fight like Christ, give yourself like Christ.

And one day, when your hour comes, you too will be able to say with peace and trust:

Father, mission accomplished. It is finished.