



### **Scripture Nugget – A heroic act of faith in a sea of unbelievers**

*Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this Man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43).*

**God chose a convicted criminal to testify to His Son, Jesus Christ as He lay dying on the Cross.** The ways of God can be so inscrutable! At the moment of Christ's dying on the cross, all seemed to be lost and hopeless. All of His disciples ran away except John who remained at the foot of the cross. Condemnation and ridicule were overwhelming and coming not just from the passers-by and rough soldiers but also from the chief priests, scribes and religious elders! It was really a great scandal that the religious leaders acted the way they did! They taunted Jesus, saying: *"He saved others; He cannot save Himself. So He is the king of Israel! Let Him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in Him (Matthew 27:42).* All were condemning Him except one lone voice coming from one of the criminals that were crucified beside Jesus, who testified to Christ, saying: *"Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (cf. Luke 23:42).* To the unbelieving onlooker, it must have been a funny spectacle: the condemned standing up for the condemned. It was clear to everyone that both were dying and seemingly "losers". More ridicule and condemnation were surely piled afresh on the poor man who dared to go against public opinion and to testify to Jesus. Such a brave, heroic act required the heart of a lion. In Christian tradition, the convict that testified to Jesus was called Dismas who was on the cross on right side of Jesus, while the impenitent thief was called Gestas who was on the cross on the left of Jesus.

**God gives great graces to those with true repentance.** Being crucified beside the cross of Christ, Dismas and Gestas were both given a rare opportunity to be close to Christ. Yet, it was Dismas that was chosen for heaven. While we can only look at the surface, God is able to look into hearts. The heart of Dismas was open due to his sincere repentance. Thus, he was able to receive many graces. He accepted his just punishment. He defended the innocence of Christ. He was able to receive the great gift of discernment that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Christ, a gift that even the religious leaders could not receive due to their pride which closed up their hardened hearts. Through the power of God's grace, Dismas used his last remaining strength to profess his faith in Christ and begged mercy for his own soul. And how he was rewarded! Jesus said to him what every soul wishes to hear: *"Amen, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43).*

**Conversation with Jesus:** Precious Lord, with all my heart, I wish that the words You said to Dismas are repeated to me on my death bed! Purify my soul of all stains of sin and open my hardened heart and fill it with Your love. Give me the grace of true repentance every time I fall from grace. Impart to me the gifts of discernment and the holy boldness necessary to testify to You when the situation calls for it. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.