

## Scripture Reading

### A Reading of the Gospel According to Luke (Luke 23:39-43)

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at Him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save Yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise." The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

### Reflection – Stand out in a Crowd

**Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34).** When Jesus uttered these words, it was done under great searing pain from the nails driven into His wrists and feet, open wounds on His scourged body, great difficulty in breathing, and a heart that was becoming compressed due to the fluid rapidly accumulating around it. However, these precious words were not lost on the "Good Thief", Dismas who was crucified beside Jesus. Though his life was spent in misdemeanor, Dismas retained a soft spot in his heart. In spite of his own misery and pain, Dismas listened carefully to what Jesus said and observed His behavior. The graces that Jesus poured into his open heart did the rest.

**Faith enlightens the mind and heart with the liberating action of the Truth (Cf. John 8:31-32).** In a moment of great divine mercy and revelation, Dismas realized that Jesus was truly the long awaited Messiah, a fact that even the chief priests and religious elders sorely missed due to their pride and hardened hearts. With the rays of divine mercy falling on his heart, he received with quiet joy God's gift of faith and with it everything else that matters at this point in time when death was staring him in the face.

**With faith comes charity and holy boldness to proclaim the Truth.** The crowds were like a pack of hounds baying for the blood of Jesus. Even Pontius Pilate, a Roman governor with power and authority was afraid of the crowds and caved in to them, giving them what they wanted – the death of Jesus by crucifixion. Even the disciples of Jesus ran away and hid in their homes for fear of their own lives except for John who stood steadfast by the Cross. In holy boldness and unafraid of running contrary to the opinion of the rowdy crowd, Dismas defended Jesus against the mocking remarks of the "Bad Thief". He pronounced Jesus innocent contrary to the many false charges the crowd fabricated against Him. In the face of desertion by His disciples, the heroic action of Dismas must have been like comforting balm to a heart broken by betrayal and desertion by His very own disciples.

**With faith comes great hope.** *Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom. (Luke 23:42).* Through the gift of faith given to Him by Jesus, Dismas realized that he was face to face with the Messiah Himself. His whole destiny suddenly changed. From despair and hopelessness of a life spent in misdemeanor, there arose indestructible hope. But time was fast running out on his life. By making the last important request to Jesus, Dismas embraced Jesus as His Lord and Saviour without a shadow of doubt. How stupendous God's mercy is! God is always looking to save everyone from eternal damnation even to the last minute of life. What God is looking for is merely a heart that can accept His love and mercy. He will do the rest – redemption and salvation.

**Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise." (Luke 23:43).** Although in steeped public disgrace, Dismas died a very happy man. He was the first saint personally canonized by Jesus. And what a saint! Despite his own miserable and weakened position, Dismas defended Jesus fearlessly against the mocking crowd at a time when Jesus was sorely in need of comfort. He was not afraid of the crowds like Pontius Pilate. He was not afraid to go against strident public opinion. Dismas displayed great boldness similar to that of our Blessed Mother in accepting to be the Mother of the Saviour, and to Abraham in obeying God's command to leave for a new land in his old age, and to sacrifice Isaac.

### Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, the Good thief set a great example in holy boldness just before he died after he opened his heart to receive Your gift of faith. When Truth is denied and scorned at, it takes great courage to go against popular opinion to stand up and defend It. Holy boldness is a gift of the Holy Spirit and has its foundation in strong faith. Strengthen my faith and give me the gift of holy boldness so that I may be counted among Your faithful ones. Lord, fill my soul with Your Holy Spirit so that I may always stand up and defend the Truth no matter how unpleasant it can be to those around me. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.