

## Scripture Reading

### A Reading of the Gospel According to Luke *(Luke 23:39-45)*

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.

### Scripture Reflection – The Thief Who Stole Paradise

**The only saint canonised by Jesus Himself.** The good thief traditionally known as St. Dismus enjoyed the rare distinction of being canonised by Jesus Himself and the first to be declared a saint. What are his sterling qualities that we can learn from?

**Holy boldness in going against the crowd.** His was a lone voice in the crowd baying for the blood of Jesus. It is not easy to go against the crowd, the popular thinking of the day. More especially so when one is in a position of extreme powerlessness. But Dismus did it. How often did this crucifixion scene repeat itself in our times? Jesus is still being crucified in the exploitation of the weak, the marginalised and the defenceless, in the ridicule of His teachings, His values and His Church, in the sacrilege and abuse of His Sacraments, in the mockery and falsehood levelled at His Person in literature, art, movies and other media. How many had the holy boldness of Dismus to stand up for Jesus?

**Humility to acknowledge own faults and accept adversity.** Despite such a state of powerlessness, desperation, intense pain and impending death, he did not fall into the temptation of joining the other thief in deflecting blame from himself by mocking at Jesus. Instead Dismus acknowledged his punishment as just and even had the moral courage to correct the other thief. How difficult it is to say, "I deserve this. It is my own fault." How easy it is to say, "It is not my business," and pass up an opportunity to correct a fault because it is an unpleasant thing to do.

**Faith greater than Abraham, Isaac or Jacob.** Dismus probably had not seen the miracles performed by Jesus, busied as he was by his own misdeeds. However in the poor heart of Dismus, amidst the weaknesses and sinfulness there were also rare virtues of holy boldness and humility. These virtues opened up his heart to the shining Truth that was before him. Despite the rejection, condemnation, powerlessness and shame of Jesus hanging pitifully on the cross, Dismus was able to recognise Jesus for what He is - the King of kings. Perhaps it was what Jesus uttered on the cross, or the tender love and forgiveness shining from Jesus' bloodshot eyes - all of which were lost on the others - that opened up the moment of saving grace for Dismus.

### Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, I come before You acknowledging all my weaknesses and faults. With You, I do not need to wear a mask. You love me as I am even though I know You wish You can see more of Yourself in my heart. I believe in Your great loving care for me just as You cared for Dismus even when You were in intense pain hanging on the Cross. At that opportune moment, You gave him the grace of salvation. Help me to cultivate virtues of holy boldness to do Your will even when it is difficult. Help me develop the virtue of humility, the bedrock for other virtues. Give me a faith so strong that I can see You in others especially in the weak and down-trodden and to do my little bit to alleviate Your sufferings. Mary, Protectress of the Faith, form my heart only for Jesus. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.