

*"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."* (Lk. 23:42)

We have just listened to, and sung, this prayer which St. Luke alone places on the lips of one of the criminals, commonly known as "Dismas" or simply the "Good Thief". These words are not only those of a dying man who in his last moments comes to conversion and repentance, they are our words, too, as we enter into the liturgical celebration of the central event of our salvation this week, the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

*"Remember me."* In popular understanding and usage, *"remember"* is associated with the recalling of past events, often accompanied by a variety of feelings dependent on the event recalled. Much of what we call remembrance is, in fact, reminiscence--a fond recalling, often humorous, of personal, family or community events of long ago. As a child I cherished the visits of my grandfather and his stories of "the good old days."

Yet, etymologically, the transitive verb, remember literally means to bring back into wholeness something that has been separated—to *"re-member"* it. This is the sense of remember in today's account of the passion and death of Jesus on the cross; his dialog with the good thief; the events we celebrate this coming week; indeed every week at the Sunday eucharist. The good thief is conscious that his life's direction and choices have led him away from God. His life, physical and spiritual, is about to end in death, and in these last moments seeing the truth and life of God poured out in Jesus, he pleads for divine mercy; *"Remember me."* *Remember me*, restore me to the original dignity of grace forfeited by Adam and Eve in paradise's garden. This simple, heartfelt plea is enough to elicit from Jesus full pardon, full communion with him, and the promise, "Today, you will be with me in paradise." Here is our hope, too. This simple petition *"Remember me"* is enough to also open heaven for us. Whoever we are, whatever the state of our soul, we pray this week, *"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*