

Homily for the requiem mass for Samay Attila on 15 October 2016 at St. Stephen's. The entire homily is here in English, although the first and last paragraphs are repeated in Hungarian.

(Lk23,33.39-43) Kedves gyászoló testvéreim! Most hallottuk a híres evangéliumot a két latorról, akiket Urunk Jézus Krisztussal együtt keresztre feszítettek – egyiket a jobb, a másikat a bal oldalán. A rossz lator nem tudott hinni a mi Urunkban. Ezen nem kell nagyon csodálkoznunk. Végül is Dávid királyt sohasem szégyenítették meg az ellenségei. Tehát a várva várt Dávid fia hogyan részesülhetne a leggyalázatosabb sorsban, amit az emberiség valaha is ismert, vagyis a keresztre feszítésben? Az akkori teológiai felfogás szerint az ilyen sors kizárólag gonosztevőknek jutott. Efféle gondolatokkal igazolva magát a rossz lator nem csupán a hitét tagadta meg Jézustól, de meg is csúfolta őt. „Nem a Krisztus vagy te?” –kérdezte gúnyosan. „Szabadítsd hát meg magad, és minket is!” A rossz lator szíve megkeményedett. Reményvesztetten feladta az Isten irgalmát. Ezzel szemben a hozzáállása a jobb latornak – akit Dizmásznak hív a hagyomány – igen rendkívülinek tűnik.

(Lk23:33, 39-43) We just heard the famous gospel about the two robbers who were crucified with our Lord Jesus Christ, one on His right and the other on His left. The bad thief couldn't bring himself to believe in our Lord. We needn't wonder exceedingly at this. After all, King David was never ravaged by his enemies. How could the long awaited Son of David suffer the most shameful fate then known to mankind, namely: crucifixion? According to conventional theological wisdom, a fate as terrible as this was reserved exclusively for wrongdoers. Justified in his own mind by some such thought, the bad thief didn't simply refuse to believe, he even mocked our Lord. "Are you not the Christ?" he asked tauntingly. "Save yourself and us!" The bad thief hardened his heart and despaired of God's mercy. Against this backdrop of unbelief, the attitude of the good thief – who is known to tradition as Dismas – appears all the more extraordinary.

St. Luke doesn't tell us how familiar the two robbers were with our Lord's life and teaching. From Dismas' reaction, however, we know that in his mind the bad thief's mockery amounted to blasphemy. "Don't you fear God?" asked Dismas in amazement. Then, after affirming his own guilt, Dismas went on to proclaim our Lord's innocence. "This man has done nothing wrong!" This protest gives us cause to wonder. In addition to being crucified with our Lord, were these two criminals also present at His interrogation before Pilate? – We simply don't know. Common sense might have convinced him of Christ's innocence, but Dismas went on to confess his faith in our Lord. Was it simply our Lord's superhuman resignation – which would even pardon His

transgressors from the cross – or did Dismas also have sure evidence of some one of Jesus' countless miracles? – Again, we don't know. One thing is certain, for whatever reason, Dismas believed that our Lord was indeed the Messiah. "Jesus, remember me," he pleaded, "when you come into your kingdom!"

The bad thief knew exactly what he wanted: to come down off his cross. But Dismas didn't dare to make the same request. By his own admission, he deserved his punishment. So he only asked for a remembrance once Jesus had come into His kingdom. Surpassing Dismas' every expectation, our Lord assured him of paradise. What's more, it would be granted that very day! This reminds us of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. After squandering his inheritance on an immoral lifestyle, the prodigal son started to go hungry in the famine stricken land where he resided. Coming to his senses, he decided to return to his father's house. But he barely dared to ask that his father might take him back as a servant. To his utter amazement, he received a son's welcome. Indeed, his father favored him with every mark of honor. So much so, that his elder brother was greatly offended. The joke is that the good thief even managed to steal heaven. May we never be scandalized by God's unfathomable mercy! After all, if we ever get to heaven – please Lord! – it won't be because we managed to pay our own admission. Jesus did that in our place!

While God's mercy shouldn't scandalize us, we mustn't be presumptuous either, thinking that we can put off our own conversion and sincere confession until much later since God is infinitely merciful. God is also infinitely just. In general, men die as they live. The good thief is the exception that proves the rule. Someone once said, "True repentance is never too late; but late repentance is seldom true." (Matthew Henry) The good thief had lived many years, yet in the last few minutes of his life he made an abrupt about face. How precious those few moments were for him, yet more precious still was the faith that he confessed therein. Faith in turn must be animated by love and the proof of Dismas' love was his unwillingness – despite his great anguish – to seek exemption from the temporal punishment that his crimes had merited for him. The souls in purgatory have the same kind of faith. But our prayers and sacrifices on their behalf can shorten their period of purification. My brothers and sisters in Christ, after we leave here today, let's not forget to pray for the repose of our beloved Attila! May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace! Amen!

Nem szabad megbotránkoznunk Isten irgalmán. Viszont nem szabad megengednünk magunknak a vakmerő reményt sem, mintha életünk végére halaszthatánk a megtérésünket meg az őszinte szentgyónásunkat, csak mert a Jóisten végtelenül irgalmas. Mert ugyanakkor végtelenül igazságos is! Általában az emberek úgy halnak meg, ahogyan éltek. A jobb lator a szabályt megerősítő kivételnek számít. Valaki

egyszer ezt mondta: „Az igaz bűnbánat sohasem késő, de a késő bűnbánat nem gyakran igaz” (Matthew Henry). A jobb lator sok évig élt, de élete utolsó perceiben teljesen megváltozott. Milyen értékesnek bizonyult neki ez a néhány perc! Ennél viszont sokkal értékesebb a hite, amelyet ez idő alatt megvallott. E hitet pedig csak a szeretet éltetheti. Dizmász szeretetének az volt a bizonyítéka, hogy az óriási fájdalom ellenére sem volt hajlandó felmentést kérni a bűncselekményei által kiérdemelt ideiglenes büntetés alól. A tisztító tűzben szenvedő lelkeknek ehhez hasonló hite van. Ugyanakkor az őértük felajánlott imáink és vezekléseink rövidíteni tudják a megtisztulásuk időtartamát. Krisztusban kedves testvéreim! Miután elmegyünk innen, ne felejtsünk el szeretett Attilánk lelki üdvéért imádkozni. A feltámadás reményében búcsúzzunk tőle. Nyugodjék békében Attila lelke, az összes megholtak lelkeivel együtt! És az örök világosság fényeskedjék nekik. Így legyen! Ámen!