

November 24, 2019

## GOOD THIEF, BAD THIEF

GOOD THIEF, BAD THIEF? Which one are we? Which one we would like to be? We are all familiar with the good thief in today's Gospel (Luke 23:35-43): next to Jesus, there were two criminals hanging on a cross. One of them - the so-called "bad thief" - mocked Jesus: "*Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.*" The other- the so-called "good thief" rebuked him: "*We have been condemned justly...but this man (Jesus) has done nothing criminal.*" Then, turning to Jesus, he said: "JESUS, REMEMBER ME WHEN YOU COME INTO YOUR KINGDOM." Jesus replied to him: "TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE." We all want to go to heaven. We all want that Jesus remembers us. He is the one who will judge us. None of us wants to hear from Jesus on our judgment day: "I do not know you" and none of us wants the door to heaven be closed on us...Like the good thief, we want to RECONCILE with Jesus, we want to ask for his forgiveness.

St. Athanasius refers to the "GOOD THIEF" or "PENITENT THIEF", as the "EVANGELIST THIEF": because of his crimes, he was being crucified, but having FAITH in Jesus, he corrects the other thief for his having no fear of God, then asks for Jesus' remembrance/forgiveness and receives much more: eternal life with God right away. "*Today you will be with me in paradise.*"

Yes, we can learn from the two different attitudes of the two thieves on the cross while facing the same desperate situation. Like the two thieves, we are all sinners. Like the good thief, we believe in the good news that JESUS IS OUR KING that He is GOD, and HE can forgive us. One day, with God's help, we cannot do it alone, we hope to be together with the good thief in paradise, in heaven, forever and ever!

There are two ways of life. Every day, we have the choice between two roads: the broad, easy road that leads us into the darkness; and the narrow, steep road that leads us into the light. These are two clear choices: spiritual death or spiritual life. While the choice should be obvious, it is not: the Devil attracts us to the broad road of pleasure, power and prestige, and many times, we are weak and do not have the strength to resist the temptations. We are like the bad thief: hopeless, unable to see the love of God in our lives, living a way of life where God is not present. However, many times like the good thief, we

turn toward God and seeks His forgiveness. As we come to a close of the liturgical Year C- Luke and enter the New Year: Year A - Matthew, we can ask God to help us to begin a new spiritual journey, away from our past, self-centered path and converging toward the right way, the narrow road of repentance and unconditional LOVE.

Next Sunday, we enter the ADVENT SEASON, the four weeks beginning the New Liturgical Year and preparing us for the JOY of CHRISTMAS! It is hard to believe that Christmas is just four weeks away.

ADVENT is always a time to turn toward God, a time of preparing our hearts for the coming of Baby Jesus.

Every Advent, everyone, children and adults, are invited to participate in our ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE. This year, Fr. DAN LEARY has once again accepted to lead us. Many of you may recall his joining us twice in the last five years. He is a talented preacher filled with the Holy Spirit. He has a deep love for Mary and for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He will talk to us about the GIFT OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION. His theme will be "FORGIVENESS AS SEEN IN EYES OF MARY AND JESUS." COME with your entire family. You will not regret it. COME AT 6:30 PM TUESDAY DECEMBER 3rd. Following Fr. Dan Leary's talk, we will have individual confessions. We hope that as in the past, we will have 10 to 12 priests.

COME HOLY SPIRIT! Fill our hearts with the fire of YOUR LOVE! Give us the humility of the "good thief" to recognize our sins and ask for FORGIVENESS!

COME HOLY SPIRIT! Give us the grace and strength to FORGIVE those who have hurt us! Come Holy Spirit! Help us to seek those who are less blessed than we are and are in need of financial and emotional support!

COME JESUS! THY KINGDOM COME! THY WILL BE DONE!

One in Christ,  
Father Alain