May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

“*Jesus, remember me*” (Lk 23: 42). Those words from the thief on the cross echo a cry that arises deep within each one of us.

We all know what it is like to be remembered and we know what it is like to be forgotten. Think of a time you were remembered, what happened, how it felt. Maybe it was a phone call, a letter, a visit, a gift, a simple word. Maybe it was a surprise or maybe it was what you were hoping for. Maybe it was as seemingly simple as someone recognizing you, looking you in the eyes, and calling you by name. Regardless of what it was or how it came about it brought you some sense of life, healing, and wholeness. We all want to be remembered. It means that we matter, we belong, we exist, and our life is real.

Compare that with a time when you were forgotten. What did that feel like? Have you ever sat in a restaurant waiting for someone who did not show up? How about that person that looks at you, begins to speak, and you realize they have no idea who you are or what your name is? Maybe someone forgot your birthday, or the anniversary of your wedding or the death of a loved one. In those moments we feel alone, abandoned, uncertain, afraid, wounded, maybe even angry. There is a sense of helplessness. Questions and doubts arise within us. We are no longer sure of our place and whether we even belong. Regardless of why or how it comes about there is hurt, separation and isolation, a dismembering of the relationship and our life.

No one wants to be forgotten or asks to be forgotten. Everyday we stand on the threshold between being remembered and being forgotten. We also stand on the threshold of remembering and forgetting another.

I’m speaking of re-membering in the sense of joining the pieces together, putting the parts back again as one. The opposite of re-membering is dis-membering; separation, pulling apart, tearing limb from limb.

The thief on the cross wants to be re-membered, put back together again. He is not asking to simply be thought about. What good does that do him? He cries out, “*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom*” (Lk 23, 42).

Just like the thief we want to be re-membered, to have the many pieces of our life put back together. Our cry to be re-membered is also a recognition and confession of our dis-memberment. We have been dis-membered. Pieces have been scattered and lost. Sometimes it happens through the circumstances of life; loss and grief, shattered dreams, disappointment, regret, failures, the death of a loved one. Other times it comes about through our actions, our words, even our thoughts. Our life becomes fragmented and broken. When that happens we can easily become thieves. We take what is not ours. We dis-member others’ lives in an attempt to put our own back together.

It happens in all sorts of ordinary ways: anger and resentment, judgment, envy, comparison and competition, gossip, the need to be right or in control, busyness. Look at your relationships. Wherever there is strain, hurt, brokenness, chances are that you or another are being dis-membered, forgotten, torn apart.

Sometimes, however, we don’t even recognize our own dis-membering. Listen to what the leaders, the soldiers, and the other thief in today’s gospel say. “Save yourself. Prove who you are. Save us.” They want a magic show. They want to escape their lives rather than have them put back together in a way they could never imagine. So they mock. They demand proof. Those are all signs of their own dis-memberment. They even divide, dis-member, Jesus’ clothes. In the midst of all that, however, there is an ironic truth. It is an inscription hanging above Jesus, a sign of re-membering: “This is the King of the Jews.” It declares a re-membering between the Jews and their king, between God and God’s people, between Jesus and us. The cross is the ultimate act of re-membering; God in Christ joining and aligning himself with us in the pain and suffering of this life. Re-membering is always act of love.

Every time we participate in the life of Christ by living with mercy, compassion, forgiveness; every time we speak a word of hope and encouragement; every time we love without condition, expectation, or payment; we participate in Christ’s re-membering of our own lives, the lives of each other, and the life of the world. We “do this in remembrance of [Jesus].” In those moments we hear the promise of Jesus, “*Today you will be with me in paradise*” (Lk 23, 43).

In Christ’s eyes we are never forgotten and dis-membered. We are forever and always re-membered. “Today you will be with me in paradise” is Jesus’ promise to each one of us, this day and every day. Amen.