

About Dismas

(from a letter to a spiritual child)

THIS MORNING JESUS TAUGHT ME SOMETHING that is so wonderful and so beautiful that I know He would want me to tell you about it right away, I think it will be best to tell it as it actually happened historically. Well, this morning as soon as I awoke I began to try, once again, to give my mind *all* to Jesus in an unceasing act of love. Sometimes I find this at least relatively easy to do, for a little while anyway, especially in the morning. But this particular morning it seemed as though all the distractions of my whole life were clamoring to be heard. So I went about my business, trying as best I could to return to Jesus – but it seemed that the more I tried, the more insistent the distractions became. But what could I do except to go on anyway? Which I did. It happened that today we had Mass here in our own chapel, so I went down to prepare for it as soon as I was dressed. Then I knelt before the Blessed Sacrament and tried to recollect myself. In a little while someone opened the door, one of the Sisters of the community here, and proceeded to open the windows, at least to make enough noise and fuss to require me to get up and help – which I did. It seemed that Jesus was really bent on not allowing me to get away from these distractions. As it turned out, the idea of this Sister was to open a window right on top of me – just when I am trying to throw off this cold, I thought; well, if Jesus wants me to be sick in addition to everything else – well, then He wants that too! So I proceeded to open the window, wide, and then I went back to my pew and the cold air began to pour down my back. But once again I tried to get back to Jesus.

By this time it was almost time for Mass, but I noticed that the water and wine were on the altar – I usually serve Mass here – so I reflected, “then they do not want me to serve; so that’s all right too!” Then the Mass began and I was grateful for my dear missal which I thought would at last let me get lost in the words of the Liturgy. But just then an English boy came into the chapel. He was about to take his seat in the pew behind mine when another Sister came over and indicated something to the effect that he should kneel beside me – God alone, and maybe she, knows why – I have my own suspicions! Then she muttered some words in Italian of which I understand absolutely nothing, and I could not restrain myself from answering, I am afraid not without some show of bitterness, however restrained, “Non ho capite niente!” And so I tried to get back to

my missal and the Mass, having missed the Introit. You can imagine that by this time I was, so to speak, “in tune” with everything that was wrong. I didn’t like the way the priest pronounced his Latin, I didn’t like his inflection, I didn’t like the way the Sisters responded, I didn’t like bossy women, especially I didn’t like bossy women, and most of all I didn’t like myself being able to think of anything except the Mass that was going on right in front of me. But I still went on making the responses as best I could and trying to pay no attention to what was in fact engaging virtually all of my attention.

And then, suddenly, I don’t know even in what part of the Mass, but I think it was after Holy Communion—I don’t really know though, but suddenly Jesus opened my mind. It was not in connection with what was going on, as it seemed, just a sudden light about loving Him and how He wanted to be loved. And yet it was the perfect answer and explanation of all that I had been experiencing. Here is what He said: “Now I want you to understand the way I want you to love Me. I want you to understand that you must love Me at this moment *with a love that dissolves every fault and sin of the past*. I want you to love Me in the realization that it is with My Love that you are loving Me, and that I want to be loved with a confidence that makes you despise all your own faults and sins of the past—and even your actually bad dispositions of this very moment. That is the way I want to be glorified in you, and by you—that is the way I want to be loved, that alone is the love that trusts My Love, which truly responds to It. Every other love is small and puny, without that fullness of understanding which delights Me because it is an understanding of the Power of My Love.” And then I found myself thinking of Dismas, of Dismas who made one such act of love and who was sanctified by it after a whole lifetime of sin and corruption. (Lk 23:39-43) And then Jesus said to me: “Yes, think of Dismas! I gave him the grace to make one such act of love and now he is a saint. But to you, My most beloved child, I give the grace to make, not one such act, but to repeat that act with each breath that I give you. Do you see, then, how great My Love is for you, and for the children I have given you, and for all My little ones?”

O the love of Jesus for His little ones! Even as I write this I am struck by my incapacity to understand the very words I am writing, as though Jesus were telling me that His children need some rational bridge, so to speak, to come to an understanding of this Charity. So now I will try to explain it a little, for myself and for you. But I would want you to understand that

this explanation is like the preheating of the wood before it bursts into flame, as John of the Cross explains – that there is a danger that we may take the warmth of the explanation in place of the Living Flame of Jesus' Love, His Love Which is One thing with His Wisdom. So try to understand this explanation, but at the same time be careful to despise whatever you can understand.

As it seems to me, we who do truly want to love Jesus are prevented from loving Him as we should, mostly by the awareness of our faults, the lack of the right disposition to love Him. And so we go to Him filled with misgivings – without realizing that going to Him with this disposition we are in reality insulting Him and making ourselves unable to receive the Love which He would pour into our soul. It is as if we had said, "Yes, Jesus, I do love You, and I do believe in Your Love for me. But I know how great my sins are, how great my corruption, and I know that You are all Holy and Pure, and therefore I know that it is impossible for You to love me, No, I do not blame you, I know You would love me more if You could, but it is I who prevent You."

O do you see how wrong this is, and how much it wounds the Heart of Jesus? Do you see how, in the name of piety, we are secretly seeking to glory in ourselves, and how in this way we resist the poverty of spirit which alone can receive everything from Him? Yes, we think always in time, and of what we have accumulated, or have not accumulated, but Jesus says to us, "Give Me this moment, only this moment: give Me that one act of love which Dismas gave Me. Do you not see? It is your act of abandoning yourself to My Love, to the Power of My Love, which alone glorifies Me and the Father in Me. The meaning of your life is not that you are accumulating virtues, but that you are preparing for that one act of dying, of dying in My Love and for My Love, and now, each moment is such a death, where you have nothing, nothing, nothing, where only My Love exists."

I must stop now, but I hope this will be a new beginning for you. Please pray and ponder this very, very much. There is only one thing which, I think, I should add: As I was writing this I turned for a moment to Teresita's *Novissima Verba*, and this is what I read: ". . . Some persons might think that it is only because I have been preserved from mortal sin that I have such great confidence in God. Make it quite clear, Mother, to all, that even if I had committed every possible crime, my confidence

would vanish as a drop of water cast into a fiery furnace." Yes, I thought, the fiery furnace of the Love of Jesus: Who can understand it? Beg Him to give you this understanding of His Love, even as He is loving you now, as you are loving Him, has reduced all your sins to nothingness for all eternity, that He not only wants to forgive your sins, but that He wants, *more than anything else*, at this very moment, to be loved by you as you can love Him only in the knowledge that your sins do not exist. And just now, as I was writing, I thought, "Yes, I can believe that about my *past* sins, Jesus, but even now I am aware of evil dispositions within myself which make it inconceivable to me that I could abandon myself to Your Love." And then it was as if Jesus spoke to me and said, "Read, then, about Dismas!" And then I wondered, because I did not remember, "Was it true, then, that Dismas too cursed Jesus before he turned to Him in love?" So I opened to Matthew (27:41-44) and read: "In like manner also the chief priests, with the scribes and ancients, mocking, said: 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. . . .' *And the selfsame thing the thieves also that were crucified with Him reproached Him with.*" And only then, after he, with the scribes and Pharisees, had mocked Jesus, does Dismas rebuke the other thief and acknowledge the innocence of Jesus. Having had the moment before the disposition of the bad thief, the disposition of the murderers of Jesus, Dismas now turns to Jesus to acknowledge Him as his King and to beg His Grace! O the depth of the Mercy of God! Do you see now, then, how Jesus wants to be glorified? As Dismas saw himself on the cross, condemned for his sins, and in the throes of his agony moved to curse Jesus, just in this state at one moment Dismas cries out in the next, "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom." This is how Jesus wants to be loved, and glorified by you, crucified as you are by your sins (He crucified with you), seeing nothing but evil and corruption in yourself, moved in yourself only to curse God and die (Job 2:9), with just this disposition, therefore, cry out to your Jesus, "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom," only now say "Lord, remember me *now that You are in Your Kingdom.*" And then, as Jesus said to Dismas "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise, so you will hear Jesus say to you, in the depths of your own hopelessness in yourself, not "This day thou *shalt* be in paradise, " but "My beloved little child, thou *art* My paradise, as I am thine!"