

GOD'S MERCY IS UNLIMITED

Today's Gospel (Matt 20:1-16) echoes the redemption of the repentant thief on Calvary (Lk 23:42). The thief seized the brief moment of faith awakened in him before death, and opened his heart to God's grace and mercy. He received a full wage that purchased himself a place in Heaven. Jesus is teaching us that nobody is beyond redemption. The wage of God's unlimited divine mercy is available to everyone who asks Him in confession, even if our sins are darker than night.

AUSCHWITZ A PLACE OF NO MERCY

The commanding officer in charge of Auschwitz was a lapsed Catholic called Rudolf Höss. He was responsible for killing up to 2.5 million people including priests and nuns. A Jesuit Priest called Fr. Lohn presented himself, one day at the gates of Auschwitz, demanding entry, so he could die with his fellow priests and parishioners. Höss spoke with this priest and his hardened heart was moved when he witnessed the love that the priest showed for his colleagues. Höss turned the priest away, refusing him entry into the death camp. After World War II, Höss was captured and placed in prison. He was sentenced to be hanged in Auschwitz. He was kept in isolation for a short period of time before his death. It was there in silence that he heard Church bells ringing each morning, and it reminded him of when he was an altar boy at the age of nine. His heart was moved by the compassion shown to him by the Polish guards. A compassion he never showed to anyone. The night before he was to die, he had a conversion of heart and asked the guards, if the Jesuit priest Fr. Lohn could be found and brought to hear his confession. As it happened, the priest was the Chaplain to the convent where St. Faustina of Divine Mercy lived some years ago. Höss, like the repentant thief on Calvary, asked for God's mercy and received it. He remained on his knees throughout the night in prayer and received Holy Communion the following morning before he was hanged.

Extraordinarily, the life of service to God for the Good Thief and the Nazi soldier were limited to a genuine moment of repentance. They both received the same wages in line with all the great saints *hired* before them, who worked a lifetime in the Vineyard (the Church) for God. Our purpose is to pray for such conversions. The ultimate divine wage is received by everybody, who answers the call of Jesus to work in the divine vineyard to produce the fruits of Love and Mercy. God is generous with His wages of Mercy. Everyone in Heaven are paid equally in Grace, regardless of the length of time they laboured in the Faith on earth. After we confess our sins in confession, not only does God forgive them, but forgets them, in order to give us a new opportunity to change our lives! God bless, Fr. Brendan.