

DISPUTE BETWEEN THE CHERUB AND THE THIEF

1. At the Crucifixion I beheld a marvel
when the Thief cried out to our Lord,
“Remember me, Lord, on the day when You come
to that Kingdom which does not pass away”. [Luke 23:43]

(REFRAIN)

Praise to You, Lord, for at Your coming
sinners turned back from their wickedness;
they entered and found shelter
in the Garden of Eden – which is the holy Church.

2. He made a petition, stretched out and gave it
to the crucified King, asking for mercy;
and He who is full of mercy heard his cry
and opened the door to his request.

3. “Remember me, Lord”, was what he cried out on the cross,
“in that Kingdom which does not pass away, [Luke 23:43]
and in that glory in which You will be revealed
may I behold Your rest, seeing that I have acknowledged You”. [cf. Luke 12:8]

4. Our Lord replied, “Since you have acknowledged me
this very day you shall be in the Garden of Eden;
in very truth, man, you will not be kept back
from that Kingdom to which you are looking.

5. “Take with you the cross as a sign, and be off:
it is a great key whereby the mighty gate
of that Garden shall be opened,
and Adam, who has been expelled, shall enter again”. [Gen. 3:24]

6. The word of our Lord was sealed
like a royal missive from the palace;
it was handed over to the thief
who took it and made off for the Garden of Eden.

7. The Cherub heard him and rushed up,
he grabbed the Thief at the gate,
stopping him with the sharp blade that he held.
All astonished, he addressed him as follows:

8. **CHERUB** "Tell me, my man, who has sent you?
What is it you want, and how did you get here?
What is the reason that brought you here?
Reveal and explain to me who it is who has sent you".

9. **THIEF** "I will tell you who has sent me,
just hold back your blade and listen to my words.
I am a thief, but I supplicated for mercy,
and it was your Lord who sent me on my way here".

10. **CHERUB** "By what powerful means did your arrival take place?
Who brought you to this dread spot?
Who transported you across the sea of fire
so that you could enter Eden? Who is it who sent you?"

11. **THIEF** "It was through the power of the Son, who sent me,
that I crossed over and came here without hindrance.
Through Him I subdued all powers
and I have come to enter here, seeing that He has given me confidence".

12. **CHERUB** "You are indeed a thief, just as you have said,
but you can't steal into this region of ours:
it is fenced in with the sword that guards it. [Gen. 3:24]
Turn back, my man, you have lost your way".

13. **THIEF** "I was indeed a thief, but I have changed:
it was not to steal that I have come here.
Look, I've got with me the key to Eden,
to open it up and enter: I will not be prevented".

14. **CHERUB** "Our region is awesome and cannot be trodden,
for fire is its indomitable wall;
the blade flashes out all around it.
How is it you have made so bold as to come here?"

15. **THIEF** “Your region is indeed awesome, just as you have said,
– but only until our Lord mounted the cross,
when He transfixed the sword of all suffering
so that your blade no longer kills”.

16. **CHERUB** “Ever since the time that Adam left
I haven’t ever seen anyone turn up here;
your race has been banished from the Garden;
you shall not enter it, so don’t argue any more”.

17. **THIEF** “Ever since the time that Adam left
your Lord has been angered at our race,
but now He is reconciled and has opened up the gate. [Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:16]
It is to no purpose that you are standing here”.

18. **CHERUB** “You should realize that it isn’t possible
for an unclean man to enter in here
– and you are a murderer, and a shedder of blood.
Who is it who has brought you to this pure place?”

19. **THIEF** “You should realize that such is the wish
of Him who makes the unclean clean, who was crucified together with me;
with the blood from His side He has washed me completely clean. [John 19:34]
It was He who has sent me to Paradise”.

20. **CHERUB** “Be off with you, man, and don’t argue any further,
for this is what I have been ordered:
to guard from your race, by means of the sword,
the Tree of Life that is to be found in here”. [Gen. 3:22]

21. **THIEF** “Be off with you, angel; you should learn and see
that I’ve left behind, hanging on Golgotha,
that very Fruit of Salvation that’s in your garden
– so that our race may now enter without any hindrance”.

22. **CHERUB** “Eve and Adam fell into debt and wrote out
a document that will not be erased: [Col. 2:14]
they went out of here under sentence
to live in low estate in the land of thorns”. [Gen. 3:18]

23. **THIEF** "The debt is repaid. Just listen, O Cherub:
the document has now been transfixed on the cross; [Col. 2:14]
by means of both blood and water your Lord has wiped it out,
and pinned it there with nails so that it won't be exacted".
24. **CHERUB** "Adam was driven out from this Garden
and there is no way he can enter here again,
for the sword's blade is revolving
and he'll encounter it should he come near".
25. **THIEF** "He who was driven out has returned to his father's house,
for the great Shepherd has gone out and found [John 10:11]
that sheep that had left the Garden;
carrying him on His shoulders, He has escorted him back". [Luke 15:5]
26. **CHERUB** "It is something totally novel that I've seen today:
a path leading back into the Garden.
But here are Adam's footprints, take a look:
he has left here and not returned again".
27. **THIEF** "Jesus your Lord has performed a novel deed,
for now He has released Adam who had been confined;
He has raised up whole crowds from inside Sheol, [Matt. 27:52]
and they have sent me in advance, to open up for them".
28. **CHERUB** "I am the cherub: how is it you have transgressed
against my office of guarding, with which I've been entrusted?
A fiery being like me cannot be vanquished,
but as for you, an offspring of Adam, how bold you are!"
29. **THIEF** "I am your companion and we have but a single Lord
in common for both of us;
His authority is much higher than either yours or mine,
and so I've no fear, seeing that it was He who has sent me".
30. **CHERUB** "You simply cannot enter in here,
for it is a resplendent place that no one can tread:
the Shekhina is escorted around inside it,
and the sword of fire is guarding it".

31. **THIEF** "You cannot hold anyone back,
for the sword is not blunted and made dull.
The cross has opened up the Garden of Eden;
there's no means by which it can still be kept closed".

32. **CHERUB** "Haven't you heard from the Bible
how the cherub and the sword go round
guarding the way to the Garden of Eden,
so that none of Adam's offspring can enter here?"

33. **THIEF** "Haven't you heard from the Revelation
that your Lord has come down and become man,
thus reconciling Adam, who was in a state of anger,
bringing back to Eden the one who had been driven out?"

34. **CHERUB** "The sign of the revolving sword
that guards the Tree of Life
frightened off Adam when he was driven out,
so how is it that you're not afraid?"

35. **THIEF** "The sign of your Lord is with me,
and by it the sharp sword is blunted;
but it too is the sentence remitted,
and by it, Adam, once expelled, shall return".

36. **CHERUB** "The ranks of fire are standing here,
thousands of them in bands innumerable;
the multitudes are awesome, and quite simply
you can't travel on any further and enter among them".

37. **THIEF** "The multitudinous ranks of which you've told me
are themselves in awe as they look upon the Cross:
the sign of the Son inspires them with awe
and they worship before it, while me they hold in honour".

38. **CHERUB** "The sign of my Lord is upon the Chariot, [Is. 66:15]
resplendent upon the Throne, but from us it is hidden, [Ezek. 1:26-7]
so how is that you—as you are claiming—
carry this sign of His and escort it?"

39. **THIEF** "His sign is upon the Chariot above,
but look, His Cross is on Golgotha below,
and with His own blood He has written a new missive
permitting Adam to come back into the Garden".

40. **CHERUB** "O agent in blood, who has brought you here?
Who is it has sent you, a murderer?
The sword is drawn, and if you make bold
the blade will flash out against you".

41. **THIEF** "O agent for the King, don't be upset;
your authority is repealed, for your Lord has willed it so.
It is His cross that I've brought to you as a sign:
look and see if it's genuine, and don't be so angry".

42. **CHERUB** "This Cross of the Son which you've brought to me
is something I dare not look upon at all.
It is both genuine and awesome; no longer will you be debarred
from entering Eden, seeing that He has so willed it".

43. **THIEF** "The Cross of your Lord has breached the wall [Eph. 2:14]
that had been built up between us and you,
Anger has passed away and peace has come,
and the path to Eden is no longer cut off".

44. **CHERUB** "He who was slain has sent to me and testified with His own blood
that I should let go of the blame which I've been wielding.
Fearful is this sign which you have brought me;
enter in, O heir; I will not turn you back".

45. **THIEF** "Resurrection has occurred for the race of humankind
that had been thrust out of their home.
You cherubim and angels, rejoice with us, [cf. Luke 15:10]
for we have returned now to your city".

46. **CHERUB** "Great is the compassion that has been shown to you,
the descendants of Adam who sinned and thus died.
Enter, thief, you will not be kept back,
for the gate is now open for those who repent".

47. **THIEF** "Great and most glorious is the compassion of my Lord, for His mercy has effected and His love has constrained Him. Rejoice with us, O spiritual beings, for we have been mingled into your race".

48. **CHERUB** "The Gentle One has held back from your race [Matt.11:29] the blade and the sword that I have been wielding. Outcasts who have returned, have no fear, enter inside the Garden with exultation".

49. **THIEF** "Praise be in Eden that is now at peace, peace on earth which has been liberated. Blessed is the Crucified One who has reconciled us so that we shall not longer be deprived of your race".

50. Thanks be to You, O Lord of all, who have brought back Adam who had been driven out, while to the thief who asked for mercy You opened up the gate that had been closed.

51. Thanks be to You, at whose word the thief entered into the Garden of Eden, and there was good hope for Adam again and he returned to the place from which he had gone out.