

The **HOMELESS**
JESUS
The sculpture of solidarity



Hungarian Charity Service
of the Order of Malta

After Washington, the Vatican, London and a number of other big cities of the world the symbol of solidarity, the sculpture of Homeless Jesus has arrived to Budapest. The statue depicting a broken man lying on a bench is the work by the Canadian sculptor, Timothy Schmalz who made the original statue in Toronto, 2013. The face of the lying figure is hidden under a blanket, the bare feet bear the wounds of crucifixion. The statue conveys a double message: let us find the face of Christ in vulnerable people and turn to them with solidarity.

The message cast in bronze is installed in a number of big cities of the world, among others in the Vatican, where the sculpture was blessed by Pope Francis.

The sculpture of solidarity arrived to Hungary in the spring of 2017. It was blessed by Cardinal Péter Erdő at Horváth Mihály Square, Budapest on 11th April, 2017. In his speech Msgr. Péter Erdő said: "Jesus simultaneously experienced the burden of homelessness and the magnificence of his mission. It is important to see the burden of our homeless brothers' living conditions and in each of them the magnificent of human existence. May God help us to find Christ in every person. The sculpture should remind us to do so."

"Everybody is lacking love. We all need somebody to say: I love you. Not only poor, broken-down and ill people need love, but everybody, even the healthy. The mission of the Order of Malta is to help those who live at the edge of society. The defenceless are those who lack love most. To be with them, to be committed to them, this is the mission of the Order of Malta. This is the only true response to their life. The risk of love."

Father Imre Kozma

President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta

"For more than thirty years we have been trying to find out how to reach down from our pedestal of well-being, how to pray together with the most vulnerable, how to reach down credibly, like Jesus, to those who are lying on the ground. Father László Varga, who was parish priest in Somogysámson twenty years ago – today he is bishop of Kaposvár – said: we need to ask ourselves if we are able to see Jesus in the poorest of the poor. If not, we had better stop trying to help. Once we are able to find the face of Jesus in the poor, then let us ensure that we can look at them in the way Jesus looked at the most vulnerable. When two pairs of eyes meet in this way, then the miracle happens. The statue of the Homeless Jesus inspires us to consider whether we want to find the human face of Jesus, and whether we try to be humans with the face of Jesus in our souls."

Miklós Vecsei

Vice-President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta



Staff members of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta who guided a group of thirty homeless people invited by Pope Francis to Rome in the Year of Mercy saw the sculpture of Homeless Jesus in the Vatican. When they returned to Budapest it turned out that another group also discovered the sculpture there and contacted the Canadian artist. "For us, the sculpture of the homeless Jesus represents solidarity, thus bringing our basic value, carefree and selfless love, closer to everyone", said Éva Madarász, one of the first sponsors of the sculpture's installation in Hungary. "The sculpture calls on our sense of community, in these times when this is especially important" said Zoltán Bruckner, another sponsor. The persons taking the initiative of the sculpture's installation in Hungary have found a partner in the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta. The key message of the sculpture is very near to the conviction of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta: that is, that what a homeless person needs before everything else is another person. The dignity of vulnerable people can not be restored by the social care system, only the community can do it. The fate of the most disadvantaged people is the common responsibility of the entire society, as according to St. Paul's teaching: "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it". The approach of the Order of Malta knows one single question in these cases: How to help? People lying on the ground have already received their punishment. Only standing people can bend down to them. The dignity of a community is created by the hand given to people lying on the ground helping them to stand up.



The sculpture of solidarity is now on a countrywide tour organised by the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, in order to bring the message cast in bronze to as many people as possible. The sculpture was exhibited in towns where the Charity Service plays a significant role in the care of homeless and needy people. Homeless Jesus was exhibited in Kecskemét, Veszprém, Miskolc, Vác Pécs, Győr and Sopron. The country-wide tour has elicited great interest, more and more settlements wish to "host" the sculpture.



"On the feet of the statue there are the wounds, touched by the disciple Thomas once, wounds preaching about the love of Jesus towards us and about his care. Jesus is there on this bench, and perhaps He is waiting for us in our lives, in the shape of another human creature, who needs our help. I am grateful to the Charity Service of the Order of Malta for bringing here the sculpture and making Jesus visible for us. May Jesus's presence, his tangible reality be always visible in the days of our life."

János Kiss, Lutheran priest
(Kecskemét, 3rd May, 2017)



"His own people betrayed Jesus, sent him to his death, he was killed, he was an outcast. The love that we feel in our hearts for Him should therefore lead us to bend down to homeless people with solidarity and love, listen to their troubles, griefs and problems, and help them as much as we can. This sculpture should remind us of homeless people lying on the ground, on a bench or on a mat, who also need our love, our solidarity. Let the sculpture touch our hearts, let it inspire us to help and to good deeds."

Vince Mikolai, dean, parish priest
(Miskolc, 18th May, 2017)



"My first thought was, how often I have seen this gesture. The ragged blanket put over the face, and whether I observed the suffering person under the blanket. Christ said: whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers you did for me. If it is so, the shortest way to Christ is the way to another human being"

István Takács, archiepiscopal chancellor
(Veszprém, 11th May, 2017)

"If you are able to stand by the side of a man lying on a bench with empathy in your heart, you may resemble Christ. The sculpture is a chance, a possibility today, but tomorrow the real grief of a needy person will be the chance. Our soul should be ready to take notice of each other and so to meet with Christ in each other, to be humans made in the image of God."

Miklós Beer, diocesan bishop
(Vác, 22nd May, 2017)





"Homelessness expresses our misery. It represents despair, lack of relationships, a case when a person has been written off by everybody, and the person has given up on himself, too. When we meet a homeless person this desperate situation is apparent, this is why we receive the sculpture of Homeless Jesus in our city today. The sculpture for us means the poverty of God, the poverty of man and the reunion of the two."

György Udvardy, diocesan bishop
(Pécs, 26th May, 2017)



"In a homeless, in a needy, in a suffering person I thirst for your love - says Christ to us. I'm thirsting for your smile, your touch, your charity, your cheerfulness, your happiness. Christ is thirsty, and is waiting for us to still his thirst for love in our fellow-creatures who are seeking love. The sculpture challenges us to act. Let it address us, challenge us, and let us act accordingly."

László Varga diocesan bishop
(Kaposvár, 20th September, 2017)

"We don't see who is under the blanket, but his feet bear the wounds of crucifixion, indicating that we ought to see Christ in each suffering and needy person. May this sculpture help us to notice people in distress and need and see Christ in them."

András Veres diocesan bishop, President,
Hungarian Catholic Bishop's Conference
(Győr, 25th June, 2017)



Homeless Psalm (detail)

"...you lie down by that poor soul
and whisper promises into his ears,
beguiling, flattering, luring him with a heavenly
kingdom, recounting with him again and again
his losses and commiserating with him,
home, country, woman, job, and honour are no more,
there is so much to lose, oh, my god,
and there is so much yet to gain, oh, my god,
but all that is mere sand running
between our fingers, and we long for your coming so,
but Lord, you have deceived us,
lying there in your nonchalance,
in the cold, next to that man on the bench,
and we lack the courage
to lie down by his side,
to lie down by your side."

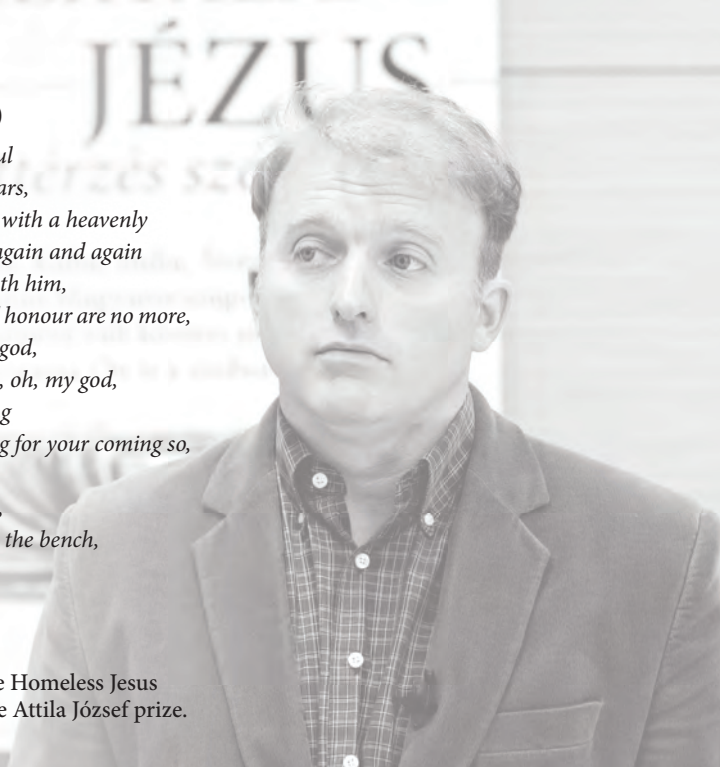
Poem inspired by the sculpture Homeless Jesus
by János Lackfi, recipient of the Attila József prize.
Translated by Adrian Hart

How to help?

3+1 advices from the Charity Service of the Order of Malta

1. If you see a person sitting or lying on the street, find some time for him/her. Bend down to him/her, talk to him/her, find out his/her name.
2. Ask him/her if we can do anything for him/her.
3. If the person is not able to answer, call the homeless dispatcher service – in Budapest phone number 061 338 4186 – or the emergency call number: 112.

+1. Don't forget that not only people on the street can be in danger. Pay attention to old lonely people who live in remote places, to families in unheated rooms. It is our responsibility to prevent tragedies.



Video playlist

Csaba Debreczeny, actor, recipient Jászai Mari Prize: "If we abandon vulnerable people, we give up our faith, our nation and our humanity."

Imre Csuja, actor, recipient Jászai Mari Prize: "What a man lying on the ground deserves is not kicking but attention and help."

János Lackfi, poet, writer: "Under an overpass I noticed a homeless wearing the same kind of Chinese slippers that I have at home. A more relevant message is not often received, even I myself could be that man."

Éva Madarász, actress, civil helper: "Solidarity can be, among other things, to call people's attention to the fact, that the person lying on the bench can be anybody. It can be me, it can be you."

Attila Epres, actor, recipient Jászai Mari Prize: "For me solidarity means effective help. I am not a believer but I truly appreciate the activity of Pope Francis and I consider his remarks about needy people very valuable."

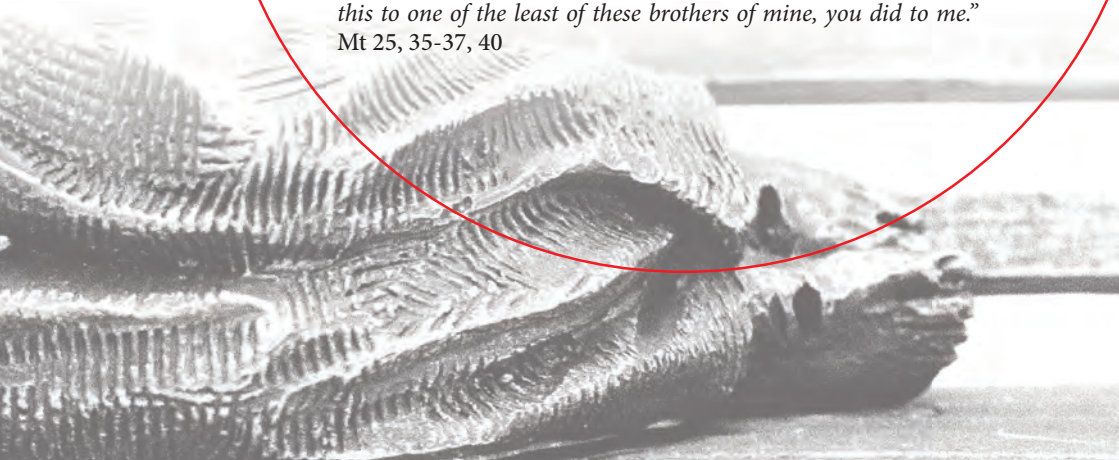
Miklós Beer diocesan bishop: "In fact, it is solidarity that makes us truly human. We have learned that from Jesus Christ who said: whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. He wants to identify himself with all of us, and expects us to consider everybody we meet as brothers. This is the only way to be a human."

Zoltán Bruckner, manager, civil helper: "I consider solidarity as a token of love. In fact, love doesn't exist without solidarity, in my opinion."

Dóra Szinetár, actress, singer: "I believe help is not about suddenly redeeming the entire world, but it is about taking very small steps - but these must be taken."

"There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen and feast magnificently every day. And at his gate there used to lie a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to fill himself with what fell from the rich man's table. Even dogs came and licked his sores. Now it happened that the poor man died and was carried away by the angels into Abraham's embrace. The rich man also died and was buried. [...] Abraham said, "My son, remember that during your life you had your fill of good things, just as Lazarus his fill of bad. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony." Lk 16, 19-25

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome. Lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me. [...] In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did to me." Mt 25, 35-37, 40



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