

CELEBRATE SABBATH

Sunday, Second Week in Ordinary Time

Stop saying how busy you are. Be still and simplify your affairs.

Isaiah 62:1-5

In this excerpt, the sixth century B.C.E. prophet tells us that the people of Judah were being given endearing names by God. These names give us images reflecting God's special love for his people. They also reflect a change of status...."you shall be called by a new name"the exiles who were "Forsaken" and "Desolate" would soon be free to return home to their own land and their own way of life. They will be newly named "My delight" and "espoused". God was claiming Judah as a groom claims his bride. A new relationship was emerging between God and the people.

The return from exile meant forgiveness, healing and reconciliation with God and the renewal of spousal love. God's forgiveness was so complete that the prophet spoke of Judah as one still in a virginal state, untouched and untainted. So, the prophet shouts, "I will not be silent".

You have a new name...you are called children of God, children of light! Rejoice and celebrate your new name and be faithful to this new identity!

Psalms 96

This Psalm celebrates the return of the exiles from Babylon and the new beginning that God had offered them. The Psalmist calls the whole earth to sing to the Lord and tell the nations about the salvation God has won for His people, to glorify God for what He has done and to bring an offering of thanksgiving. This Psalm is a beautiful worship song, singing the praises of God who creates and renews and constantly makes new beginnings.

This Psalm also has a missionary dimension as it calls to proclaim God's salvation to all the nations. It proclaims the God of Israel as radically different from gods of all other nations. Our God is a God of Holiness, who does marvelous things, who judges all peoples with righteousness and loving kindness and a God of unfailing faithfulness. All peoples are to be reached with this good news.

This Psalm also is a beautiful Poem calling the heaven to be glad, the earth to rejoice, the sea to roar, the field to exult, the trees to sing for joy because God has created, renewed and established the world and "it shall never be moved". This is the reason for singing a new song of joy.

God makes all things new. Each day is a new day and each day calls for a new song. Every day that we wake up is a good day. Every breath that we take is filled with hope for a better day. Every word that we speak is a chance to change what is bad into something good. And so.....

**Sing to the Lord a new song,
Sing to the Lord all you lands,
Sing to the Lord bless his name.
Announce his salvation day after day.**

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

The Corinthian church had been experiencing disharmony as some of its members had claimed that their gifts were greater than those of others. Paul reminded his readers that their gifts, though different, had a common source: the same spirit and a common purpose: the well-being of the whole community. God has gifted the community in diverse ways for the good of the community.

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to see all works and services rendered by the community as good, necessary and valuable gifts.....that those who do the household chores such as arranging the gathering space, fixing the meals, cleaning the house, etc. are just as important, and just as graced by God in their giving, as those who act as ministers of God's Word. Therefore, all should be respected and appreciated, as all work together for a harmonious community. In order to foster the quality of community life that befits disciples of Jesus, Paul invited the community to simply place their gifts at the service of all.

Be grateful for all the gifts that God has given you and use them for the well-being of your family and community!

John 2:1-11

Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding at Cana. A wedding was traditionally associated with the coming of the messiah and the age of salvation. In this excerpt, John presents Jesus as the long-awaited messiah who changed water into wine and thus provided an abundance of fine-quality wine..... 6 jars of 20-30 gallons of water was changed into wine! The water, contained in the six stone jars, was meant for the ceremonial washing prescribed by Jewish law (Leviticus 11:29-38).....for washing their feet....hand washing before the meal and so on. Not to wash, as prescribed by law, would have rendered a person ritually unclean and therefore unfit to participate in the communal celebration. It was the water used for purification that Jesus turned into choice wine.

Jesus had come to replace the religious customs and institutions of Israel with himself. No longer would washing with water be a means of achieving purity or holiness. Purification or holiness would be achieved by accepting the new wine Jesus offered. This new wine of his wisdom, his words and his works was far greater, more precious and a profoundly more effective means of salvation than anything that had preceded it, including the Jewish law, which was often described by the rabbis as a font of living water. The challenge was and is to look no longer to the law as a font of life, but to Jesus as the way, the truth and the life...

Look to Jesus as your way, your truth and your life!

Saint of the Day, January 16 - Saint Berard and Companions and 12 other saints are remembered this day.

We know very little about the early life of St. Berard. According to tradition, he was born into a noble family of Leopardi, and was a native of Carbio in Umbria, a province of the Papal States. He was received into the newly founded Franciscan Order by St. Francis of Assisi in 1213. At the conclusion of the Second General Chapter of the Franciscan friars in 1219, Francis believed that the

time had come for the friars to extend their apostolic activities beyond the Italian peninsula and northern Europe. Berard was well versed in Arabic, was an eloquent preacher, and was chosen by Francis, together with two other priests, Peter and Otho, and two lay brothers, Accursius and Adjutus, to evangelize in Morocco.

The five missionaries set sail from Italy and arriving in Portugal, crossed into Spain and then to Seville, then still under Muslim rule, where their preaching antagonized the king. After imprisoning them for three weeks, he expelled them to the Kingdom of Morocco. Despite the fact that only one of the five, Berard, knew Arabic, their open preaching of the Gospel and their bold denunciation of Islam soon caused them to be viewed as insane.

The king ordered them escorted to Ceuta and put aboard ships bound for Christian lands. However, the friars left the ships, returned to Morocco, and resumed preaching. They were then released and given guides to take them to Christian territory, but they once again returned. When it became apparent, they would neither go away nor stop preaching, they were apprehended and cast into prison. Since they could not be persuaded to abandon their Catholic faith, the Moorish king, in a fit of rage, beheaded them with his scimitar, making them the first martyrs of the Franciscan Order.

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