

MORNING MEDITATION

Wednesday of Holy Week

We all have within us a center of stillness surrounded by silence.

(Dag Hammarskjold)

Isaiah 50:4-9

The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue, that I may know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them.

Reflect on developing a “well-trained tongue” and “well-disciplined” life... Reflect on speaking words of affirmation, compassion, encouragement, kindness and support.....

Remember the “weary” – many who are “weary” of hunger and thirst, of poverty and disease; of war and violence; of life and its many such struggles.....

Psalms 69

**I will praise the name of God in song,
And I will glorify him with thanksgiving.....
You who seek God, may your hearts be merry!**

Matthew 26:14-25

Judas made plans to betray Jesus for thirty silver pieces.....sold out his master who trusted him and offered him friendship.....what a dreadful bargain!!! This betrayal was not only the betrayal of Jesus – it was also the betrayal of the other eleven disciples, betrayal of friendship, betrayal of community.....

Remember and pray with those who suffer from betrayal from their loved ones!

Jesus, gently, but definitely and directly called Judas to reflect over what he was planning to do. Judas refused to listen.

Listen to the gentle voices that call you to reflect on what you are doing! Listen and respond to the gentle corrections that come from those around you!

Saint of the Day, April 8

St. Julie Billiart and 26 other saints are remembered this day.

Julie was born on July 12, 1751, at Cuvilly, France, into a family of well-to-do farmers.

From her early childhood, she showed an interest in religion and in helping the sick and poor. Though the first years of her life were relatively peaceful and uncomplicated, Julie had to take up manual work as a young teen when her family lost its wealth. However, she spent her spare time teaching catechism to young people and to the farm workers.

By the age of seven, she knew the catechism by heart, and used to gather her companions around her to recite it and explain it to them. Her education was very basic at the village school kept by her uncle and in spiritual matters, she made such progress that the parish priest allowed her to make her First Communion and to be confirmed at the age of nine. She took a vow of chastity five years later.

She was held in very high esteem for her virtue and piety, and was commonly called, "the saint of Cuvilly". Witnessing an attempt at her father's life, Julie was paralyzed and became a complete invalid for 30 years. She spend most her time in prayer and contemplation and the rest of her time was occupied in making linens and laces for the altar and in catechizing the village children whom she gathered around her bed, giving special attention to those who were preparing for their First Communion.

When the French Revolution broke out in 1789, revolutionary forces became aware of her allegiance to fugitive priests. With the help of friends, she was smuggled out of Cuvilly in a haycart. She then spent several years hiding in Compiègne in Northern France, being moved from house to house despite her growing physical pain. She even lost the power of speech for a time. It was at this time that she had a vision in which she saw Calvary surrounded by women in religious habits and heard a voice saying, "Behold these spiritual daughters whom I give you in an institute marked by the cross."

As time passed and Julie continued her mobile life, she made the acquaintance of an aristocratic woman, Françoise Blin de Bourdon, who shared Julie's interest in teaching the faith. In 1803, the two women began the Institute of Notre Dame, which was dedicated to the education of the poor, young Christian girls, and the training of catechists. The following year, the first Sisters of Notre Dame made their vows. That was the same year that Julie recovered from the illness: She was able to walk for the first time in 22 years.

Though Julie had always been attentive to the special needs of the poor and that always remained her priority, she also became aware that other classes in society needed Christian instruction. From the founding of the Sisters of Notre Dame until her death, Julie was on the road, opening a variety of schools in France and Belgium that served the poor and the wealthy, vocational groups, teachers. Ultimately, Julie and Françoise moved the motherhouse to Namur, Belgium. Julie died there in 1816. She was canonized in 1969.

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