

MORNING MEDITATION

Monday, First Week in Ordinary Time

The thankfulness muscles respond comfortably well to exercise!

Hebrews 1:1-6

The author of this letter presents Jesus as the reflection of the Father's image. The disciples of Jesus must reflect this image.

Psalm 97

The Lord is king; let the earth rejoice;
Let the many isles be glad.
Justice and judgments are the foundation of his throne.

Mark 1:14-20

John the Baptist had prepared the way for Jesus. John was arrested and in prison. Now Jesus begins to get on the "Way" that John had prepared. Eventually, we know that Jesus would become the "WAY". Jesus began his ministry in Galilee by proclaiming "GOOD NEWS": "now is the time...the reign of God is at hand...repent and believe the good news". It is good news that Jesus came to bring and it is the same good news that we are called to proclaim with our lives: Good News of forgiveness, of healing, of hope, of peace, of promise, of salvation, of God's unconditional love, of everlasting life.....

This Good News calls us to "repentance". The Greek word "metanoia" literally means "a change of mind". It refers, therefore, to a change of attitude, to a change of mentality, to a change of heart. It is not about feeling sorry for the consequences one's sins. It is "change of sinfulness - sinful attitudes, sinful ways, sinful relationships, sinful behavior patterns, sinful presence.....

Belief in the good news means that we take in the good news Jesus proclaimed. We cannot welcome (take in) good news without real repentance, without a change of heart, of mind, of attitude.....

The men Jesus called were simple folks. Jesus called them while they were doing their day's work. The call of God comes not only in the house of God, not only in secret places, but in the middle of the day's work. We live in a world that is "full of God" and we hear his call if we listen. The simple folks that Jesus called responded and now it is up to us to respond to God's call and proclaim the "good news".

Saint of the Day, January 11 - St. Theodosius the Great, the Cenobiarch and 23 other saints are remembered this day.

Theodosius was born at Garissus, Cappadocia (modern Turkey), in 423. He undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and after meeting with the famed St. Simeon Stylites, he entered a monastery. He was the founder of cenobitic monasticism. With deep desire for the solitary life, he settled in Palestine into a desolate cave, in which, according to Tradition, the three Magi had spent the night, having come to worship the Savior after His Nativity. He lived there for thirty years in great abstinence and unceasing prayer. People flocked to the ascetic, wishing to live under his guidance. When the cave could no longer hold all the monks, Saint Theodosius prayed that the Lord Himself would indicate a place for the monks. Taking a censer with cold charcoal and incense, the monk started walking into the desert.

At a certain spot the charcoal ignited by itself and the incense smoke began to rise. Here the monk established the first cenobitic monastery, or Lavra (meaning “broad” or “populous”). Soon the Lavra of Saint Theodosius became renowned, and up to 700 monks gathered at it. According to the final testament of Saint Theodosius, the Lavra rendered service to neighbors, giving aid to the poor and providing shelter for wanderers.

Saint Theodosius was extremely compassionate. Once, when there was a famine in Palestine and a multitude of people gathered at the monastery, the monk gave orders to allow everyone into the monastery enclosure. His disciples were annoyed, knowing that the monastery did not have the means to feed all those who had come. But when they went into the bakery, they saw that through the prayers of the abba, it was filled with bread. At the monastery, Saint Theodosius built a home for taking in strangers, separate infirmaries for monks and laymen, and also a shelter for the dying. Seeing that people from various lands gathered at the Lavra, the saint arranged for services in the various languages: Greek, Georgian and Armenian. All gathered to receive the Holy Mysteries in the large church, where divine services were chanted in Greek.

During the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius (491-518) there arose the heresy of Eutychius and Severus, which recognized neither the sacraments nor the clergy. The emperor accepted the false teaching, and the Orthodox began to suffer persecution. Saint Theodosius stood firmly in defense of Orthodoxy and wrote a letter to the emperor on behalf of the monks, in which they denounced him and refuted the heresy with the teachings of the Ecumenical Councils. The emperor showed restraint for a short while, but then he renewed his persecution of the Orthodox. Leaving the monastery, Theodosius came to Jerusalem and in the church, he stood at the high place and cried out for all to hear: “Whoever does not honor the four Ecumenical Councils, let him be anathema!” For this bold deed the monk was sent to prison, but soon returned after the death of the emperor.

Before his death, Saint Theodosius summoned to him three beloved bishops and revealed to them that he would soon depart to the Lord. After three days, he died at the age of 105 in 529. The saint’s body was buried with reverence in the cave in which he lived at the beginning of his ascetic life.

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