

MORNING MEDITATION

Monday, Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**God has created us as special individuals
and has endowed us all with a great purpose.**

Hebrews 11:32-40

The author remembers the heroes and saints of the Old Testament and the sufferings and trials they endured. He sees the fulfillment of their sufferings in Christ and all of us being included in the plan of fulfillment in and through Christ.

Psalms 31

**How great is the goodness, O Lord,
Which you have in store for those who fear you,
And which, toward those who take refuge in you,
You show in the sight of the children of men.**

Mark 5:1-20

Encounter with Jesus brings freedom to a man who was demon-possessed.

Encounter with Jesus is always a freeing experience.

Jesus sends the demons into the swine. The place of demons is with the swine - not with people. The man and his neighbors who were convinced that they were under oppression of demons encountered a greater power - a power that does not oppress but frees.

The power of God, the power of Grace, the power of love is always freeing - never oppressive.

The value of a person can not be compared with the value of a herd of swine. But people did compare. It did not matter that a man regained his good senses - all that mattered was that their pigs perished. So, they were afraid - they had "some-thing" to lose and that "some-thing" was more important than the loss of people.

Stay focused on higher values. Helping people is more important than profit or gain.

Saint of the Day, February 3 - St. Blaise and 22 other saints are remembered this day

According to tradition, St. Blaise was born to rich and noble parents, and received a Christian education. He was a physician before being consecrated bishop of Sebastia, Armenia. During the persecution of Licinius, St. Blaise moved from the town and lived as a hermit in a cave. Blaise was discovered and apprehended. While in prison, he miraculously cured a small boy who was choking to death on a fishbone lodged in his throat. Also, the woman whose pig had been saved brought St. Blaise candles so that his cell would have light and he could read the Sacred Scriptures.

Agricolaus, governor of Cappadocia, tried to persuade Blaise to sacrifice to pagan idols. The first time Blaise refused, he was beaten. The next time he was suspended from a tree and his flesh torn with iron combs or rakes. Finally, he was beheaded.

By the sixth century, St. Blaise's intercession was invoked for diseases of the throat in the East. As early as the eighth century, records attest to the veneration of St. Blaise in Europe, and he became one of the most popular saints in the spiritual life of the Middle Ages. Many altars were dedicated to his honor, and even the Abbey of St. Blaise in southern Germany claimed to have some of his relics.

We know more about the devotion to Saint Blaise by Christians around the world than we know about the saint himself. His feast is observed as a holy day in some Eastern Churches. In 1222, the Council of Oxford prohibited servile labor in England on Blaise's feast day. The Germans and Slavs hold him in special honor, and for decades many United States Catholics have sought the annual Saint Blaise blessing for their throats.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs