

CELEBRATE SABBATH

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

We must confront any situation, however difficult it may be, with courage, faith, serenity, confidence and a lot of spiritual strength.

Isaiah 8:23 – 9:3

The setting is a civil war between the two kingdoms into which the Jewish nation was split after the death of Solomon: Judah (South) and Israel (North). Judah had called in the Assyrians to help. They invaded Israel and took many captives among the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali (735-732 B.C.) Isaiah saw all this as a punishment for sin, especially the king's lack of faith in God. As descendant of the great king David, they should be representatives of God on earth. They failed.

In this excerpt, Isaiah sings his dream of an ideal king, a king of peace, who would dispel darkness, bring joy in abundance, break the yoke that burdens and crush the rod of the task master.

Wait patiently and in hope.... He comes...Emmanuel...wait with courage!

Psalm 27

Psalm 27 proclaims the firm faith and boundless hope that God is all that the Psalmist longs for and God will bring deliverance, salvation. The psalmist longs for the presence of God in the Temple and protection from all enemies. He says, "I believe" and "I trust" and speaks of "seeking his face". To "seek the face" is to be in God's presence, to be in communion with God.

**The Lord is my light and my salvation;
Whom should I fear?
The Lord is my life's refuge;
Of whom should I be afraid?**

I Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

There were dissents and factions in the community at Corinth. Paul wrote to the community, challenging them to be united in mind and heart. All are called to share in the life and mission of Jesus. It is unwise to take sides, form cliques, factions and exclusive groups. The disciples of Jesus must work toward cultivating and maintaining a sense of community, belongingness, unity in spirit, life and mission.

Pray for respect for differences, unity in diversity, fellowship in communities and harmony in the world.

Mathew 4:12-23

Mathew, a Jew, writing for Christians of Jewish background, sees Isaiah's dream being fulfilled in Jesus, who begins his ministry in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. John the Baptist was arrested and imprisoned. For Jesus, time had come to go forth and fulfill His mission. So he left Nazareth and took up residence in Capernaum. He left his home never again to return to live in it. **He closed the door behind before he opened the one in front!**

He went to Galilee to begin his mission. Among the many characteristics of Galilee, one that is of special significance is that it had a mixed population, surrounded by the Gentiles.

His message was going to be proclaimed to a wider circle from the beginning - a more inclusive mission!

The message of Jesus was not preached or taught, but proclaimed..... His message was simple, pure, uncomplicated good news.... He proclaimed the good news with a voice of certainty, with a voice of authority, with the voice of God. His message was to repent, to turn from our own ways and turn to God and God's ways.....to rent your hearts, to Change your attitudes..... because the Kingdom has come..... Eternity has invaded time.....God has entered the earth in Jesus and chose to stay.....

So, it is urgent to choose to close the door behind and open the door in front and walk in.

Saint of the Day, January 25 – Conversion of St. Paul and 14 other saints are remembered this day.

Paul was a highly educated and zealous Jewish Pharisee, who, like many of his peers, wanted to erase the notion that Jesus was the Messiah and Son of God. Paul witnessed and supported the stoning of St. Stephen for his belief, faith and mission in Christ. Paul's own mission was to find, arrest, and imprison all who believed and followed Christ's teachings.

However, in 36 C.E., Paul's life changed forever. While he was on his way to Damascus to find and capture more of Jesus' followers, Paul had a personal encounter with Jesus in which Jesus called Paul to bring the Gospel to all people, including the gentiles. Paul's

hatred turned to joy and devotion to the Lord. He wrote that it is “for this reason that I labor and struggle, in accord with the exercise of his power working within me” (Colossians 1:29). Paul’s ministry and writings bringing Christ’s redeeming salvation spanned 32 years. Paul traveled through Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia and Rome where he proclaimed the richness and power of God’s love. Paul suffered for the sake of Christ, too. He endured beatings, imprisonments, and finally martyrdom in Rome in 68 C.E. through the order of the Roman Emperor Nero.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs