

MORNING MEDITATION

Friday, Third Week in Ordinary Time

God is steadfast Love.

**The Psalmist meditates and invites us to join him in meditation,
“I have stilled my soul, hushed it like a weaned child.
Like a weaned child on its mother's lap, so is my soul within me.”
(Psalm 131:2)**

Hebrews 10:32-39

The author encourages his reader not to surrender their confidence. He says...you will find confidence rewarding..... Be patient and do God's will..... God will reward you for your faithfulness.

Psalm 37

**Commit to the Lord your way; trust him and he will act.....
The steps of man is made strong by the Lord,
He does not lie where he fell,
For the hand of the Lord sustains him.....**

Mark 4:26-34

The Kingdom of God is like..... a man sows, the seed sprouts and grows. This short parable reminds us of the “helplessness and insufficiency of man”. The farmer does not make the seed grow. He does not even understand how it grows. It has a secret of life and growth of its own. No man ever possessed the secret of life and its mysteries. Man neither creates nor invents – he only discovers.

Man does not create the Kingdom of God. He only participates in the Kingdoms' life and growth. Human efforts are spasmodic with increase and decrease, health and ill health....

The growth of the Kingdom is constant and imperceptible from day to day – the growth goes on because it is God's work, God's ongoing creative activity.

Nature's growth is imperceptible; growth is constant; growth is inevitable; harvest time will come.

The kingdom is like a grain of mustard seed.....A small grain of seed grows into a tree that can shelter and feed the birds of the sky.

So be prepared, be patient, be optimistic. Do all you can, to nurture growth of the Kingdom. Never be afraid or ashamed of small beginnings.

Saint of the Day, January 27 – St. Angela Merici and 19 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Angela Merici was born on March 21, 1474 in Desenzano, a small town in Lombardy, Italy. Angela and her older sister became orphans at the age of 10 and went to live with their uncle in Salo. There they led a quiet and devout Catholic Christian life. After the untimely death of her sister, Angela dedicated herself to the Lord and give her life in service to the Church to help everyone grow closer to the Lord. She joined the Third Order of St. Francis where she also pledged to remain a consecrated virgin, forsaking marriage to one man to be married to the Lord and His Church.

When Angela was 20 years old, her uncle died, and she returned to Desenzano. She found that around her hometown there were many young girls who had no education and no hope. Her heart was moved. She also became distressed by their ignorance and upset at the parents who had not educated them. Angela became convinced that there was great need for a better way of teaching these young girls. So, she opened her own home to them and began to teach them herself. She devotedly taught them the Catholic Christian faith. By her example and instruction, she taught them to pray and participate in the sacramental life of the Church. She evangelized and catechized these young girls, opening them up to the life of grace.

On November 25, 1535, Angela gathered together 12 young virgins and laid down the foundation for the Order of the Ursulines. Her goal was to elevate family life through Christian education for women. The community she founded was different than many of the religious orders of women which existed in her day. She believed it was important to teach the girls in their own homes with their own families. One of her favorite sayings was, "Disorder in society is the result of disorder in the family."

Though the women in the community wore no special religious habit and took no formal vows, Angela wrote a Rule of Life for those who lived and served in the community of women. They did pledge to live a life of consecrated celibacy, poverty and obedience. They lived this Rule of Life within their own homes. This was the first group of consecrated women to work outside of a formal cloister or convent in her day and became the first teaching order of women in the Catholic Church. The community existed as what is called a "secular institute" until years after Angela's death.

Angela Merici died on January 27, 1540. She was beatified on April 30, 1768 by Pope Clement XIII and canonized May 24, 1807 by Pope Pius VII. Her Rule was officially approved by Pope Paul III in 1544 and the Ursulines became a recognized religious community of women with a teaching ministry.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs