

MORNING MEDITATION

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Let go of the ambitions, cravings and desires of this life
and you find peace and serenity.**

Ezekiel 18:25-28

Ezekiel tells his people that even for sinners who said “no” to God, a new beginning is possible because the future of a human being is not predetermined by his/her past. The individual is not a slave of his past.... the past cannot determine the future...the present is an opportunity for conversion and transformation.

Now is the moment of Grace...this moment offers new opportunities for new choices and decisions, for new possibilities and new beginnings. Ezekiel promised his people hope for a new and brighter and joyful life. He said to them, repent and all will be well! It is possible for a person to repent and change his ways. Even for man who has said a lifetime of “no” can change the “no” into a “yes”. Because, Ezekiel says, the Lord remembers virtuous life and forgets crimes of the past.

Virtue means strength and life. Absence of virtue means weakness and eventual death. A lifetime of sin, saying “no” to God can be changed into a life of “yes”, a life of virtue. A lifetime of “yes”, a life of virtue can also be changed into a life of “no”, a life of sin.

So be vigilant, be cautious, be discerning. Transform negative responses to God into positive ones. You are called to live virtuous lives!

Psalms 25

This is an acrostic (alphabetic) Psalm – each single verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew Alphabet. Read the Psalm carefully and see how the Psalmist speaks of God as “the way, the truth and the life” and asks God to teach him His “way, truth and life” – Jesus will, years later, speak of himself as the way, the truth and the life. This Psalm carries for us the following insights: Mistakes of the past can weigh heavily and burden my spirit. People can bring me shame, disgrace and dishonor. But I desire God’s way and His way is a way of compassion. I know God’s way can guide me rightly and bring me peace and make me whole. I must accept God’s way; God’s saving rule, God’s wisdom, with reverence. In God’s way, I find forgiveness, grace, peace.

In God, I find a firm, guiding hand, a warm, loving friend, a strong companion on my journey. God shows the way and I follow. I seek to know and embrace God’s truth and God’s life.

**Your ways O Lord, make known to me
Teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
For you are God, my savior.**

Philippians 2:1-11

In this early Christian hymn, the love of Christ, which Christians are called to share and emulate, is described as “self-emptying” love. Christ emptied himself in total giving by dying on the cross. Christians are called to empty themselves in compassion and love.

Paul invited the Philippians and he invites us today to be imitators of Christ, to nurture the mentality of Christ, to make the mind and heart of Christ our own. The mentality of Christ, the spirit with which he lived was one of total giving, emptying himself for all in total surrender to the will of his father. Ordinarily, everything in us, human beings, tend to move toward accomplishments, achievements and fulfillment and the way of the world is toward self-fulfillment. The disciples of Jesus are called to empty themselves for others in love and service.

Give yourself to each other in love and service!

Mathew 21:28-32

This parable speaks of a man who professed obedience to his father and remained unfaithful in practice and another man who verbally rebelled and refused obedience but remained faithful in practice. Neither of them is an ideal. However, the second one seems to have done better, at least he did what had to be done. The ideal would have been the acceptance of the father’s direction and following it through. There are some whose profession is much better than their practice. And there are those whose practice is much better than their profession.

The parable challenges us to let our profession and practices meet. It also teaches us that promise can never take the place of performance, that fine words can never be substituted for fine deeds.

This parable proclaims the compassion and mercy of God available to all sinners, to all who have said “no” to God and God’s ways. The righteous and the law-abiding people at the time of Jesus regarded the salvation of sinners and tax collectors as impossible. Jesus offered new possibilities for all who have turned away from God. Those who turn to God, away from sinful ways, will always find a welcome. This is the promise of the parable.

Saint of the Day, September 27 - St. Vincent de Paul and 16 other saints are remembered this day

Vincent de Paul was born on April 24, 1581, in the village of Pouy, in the Kingdom of France, to peasant farmers. At 15, his father sent him to a seminary, managing to pay for it by selling the family's oxen. For two years, Vincent received his education at a college in Dax, France, adjoining a monastery of the Friars Minor where he and others resided. In 1597, he began his studies in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Toulouse.

He was ordained a priest on September 23, 1600, at the age of nineteen. This was against the regulations established by the Council of Trent which required a minimum of 24 years of age for ordination, so when he was appointed parish priest in Tilh, the appointment was appealed in the Court of Rome. Rather than respond to a lawsuit in which he would probably not have prevailed, he resigned from the position and continued his studies. On October 12, 1604, he received his Bachelor of Theology from the University of Toulouse. Later he received a Licentiate in Canon Law from the University of Paris.

In 1605, while on a ship traveling from Marseilles to Narbone, he was captured, brought to Tunis and sold as a slave. Two years later he and his master managed to escape, and both returned to France. St. Vincent went to Avignon and later to Rome to continue his studies. While there he became a chaplain to the Count of Goigny and was placed in charge of distributing money to the deserving poor. He became pastor of a small parish in Clichy for a short period of time, while also serving as a tutor and spiritual director.

From that point forward he spent his life preaching missions to and providing relief to the poor. This work became his passion. He later extended his concern and ministry to convicts. The need to evangelize and assist these souls was so great that he founded the Ladies of Charity, a lay institute of woman, to help, as well as a religious institute of priests - the Congregation of Priests of the Mission, commonly referred to now as the Vincentians.

This was when there were not many priests in France and those who were there were, were neither well-formed nor faithful to their calling. Vincent helped reform the clergy and their formation and prepared them for the priesthood. He did this first through the presentation of retreats and later by helping develop seminaries. At one point his community was directing 53 seminaries. His retreats, open to priests and laymen, were so well attended that it is said he infused a "Christian spirit among more than 20,000 persons in his last 23 years."

The Vincentians remain with us today with nearly 4,000 members in 86 countries. In addition to his order of Vincentian priests, St. Vincent cofounded the Daughters of Charity along with St. Louise de Marillac. There are more than 18,000 Daughters today serving the needs of the poor in 94 countries. He was eighty years old when he died in Paris on September 27, 1660. He was canonized on June 16, 1737, by Pope Clement. He had "become the symbol of the successful reform of the French Church". St. Vincent is sometimes referred to as "The Apostle of Charity" and "The Father of the Poor".

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

