

CELEBRATE SABBATH

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Great tranquility of heart is his who cares for neither praise nor blame.

(Thomas A. Kempis)

Isaiah 58:7-10

The Prophet Isaiah invites us to change not only our behavior but also our heart. True worship includes caring for the needs of the poor, the oppressed and the homeless.

Vatican II document says, “the poor cry for a change of heart and mind” (ES) and that is what Isaiah calls for. An attitudinal change, change of heart is what brings about genuine change in the person and the world around the person.

Justice and the care of the orphans, the poor and the widows are integral part of covenant relationship. They are also our Christian responsibility.

Psalms 112

The Psalmist proclaims, “Happy are those who fear the Lord”. The Greek word for “fear”, phobia, is found in more than seventy-five compound words in English. Most of the terms have been coined by psychologists and moral philosophers to cover the many aspects of modern man’s basic fear of life. The fact is that fear is one of the great threats to mental health today. Our children are constantly exposed to many things such as war and violence that makes them afraid. Does “fear of the Lord” mean one of these phobias? Is it the “hell-fire” that was instilled into some of us during our early formation?

Hebrew verses very often employ two lines in parallel, the one-line interpreting or adding to the thought in the other line. So here, if our poet declares “Happy” the one who fears the Lord and if he delighted in the Lord’s commandments, then his “fear of the Lord” must have been a glad awareness of the awe-filled mystery of God’s loving kindness. This “fear” should be translated as “reverential awe” or “awe-inspiring” – it is fear that frees and not freezes. This “fear” cannot be translated into one single English word. The word captures all that happens inside of a person who has become aware of the awesome presence of God, the tremendous and fascinating mystery that God is.

**Light shines through darkness for the upright;
He is gracious, merciful and just.
Well for the man who is gracious and lends,
Who conducts his affairs with justice.**

I Corinthians 2:1-5

Paul taught the Corinthians to trust the wisdom of God and not any philosophical arguments. He did not come with any particular eloquence or “wisdom” but with the message of Jesus, crucified. Faith, he said, rests not on the wisdom of men but on the wisdom of God and this wisdom is revealed in Jesus, in his death on the cross.

Let your faith come to life...let it be visible in the way you relate to one another.

Mathew 5:13-16

You are the salt of the earth...What if the salt loses its taste? What if it loses its quality to flavor and to cleanse and to purify and to preserve and to stabilize?

Disciples of Jesus are called to be the “salt” of the earth! To be the “salt” is to be the cleansing, purifying, healing, preserving and stabilizing agent.

Disciples of Jesus must remain “flavoring, cleansing, purifying, healing, preserving, stabilizing” agents. What would a Christian be in the world without the qualities of Christian living?

You are the light of the world. Your light must shine before all so that they see goodness in your actions and give praise to your heavenly Father.

Light dispels darkness, light makes things visible, light gives warmth, light heals, light makes the way visible...

This is what the disciples are called to be for the world...to be men and women whose presence dispels darkness, reveals the truth, encourages warmth of affection, facilitates healing of brokenness, awakens the sleeper, shows the way...

Darkness never feels at home with light! Light shines in the darkness! Darkness cannot shine in the light! Lean toward the light that God sends... Let God’s light dispel all the darkness inside and out and around and about.

Saint of the Day, February 8 - St. Jerome Emiliani and 13 other saints are remembered this day.

Jerome was born in Venice in 1486. His father died when he was a teenager and he ran away at the age of 15 to join the army. He was appointed governor of a fortress in the mountains of Treviso, and while defending his post he was taken prisoner. In prison Jerome had a lot of time to think, and he gradually learned how to pray. He had not cared about God, but he attributed his escape to the intercession of the Mother of God;

and he made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Treviso, in fulfillment of a vow, and left his chains as an offering.

When he escaped, he returned to Venice where he took charge of the education of his nephews and began his own studies for the priesthood. In the years after his ordination, events again called Jerome to a decision and a new lifestyle.

All his spare time was devoted to the study of theology and to works of charity. In the year of plague and famine (1528), he seemed to be everywhere and showed his zeal, especially for the orphans, whose number had so greatly increased. Jerome began caring for the sick and feeding the hungry at his own expense. He rented a house for them near the church of St. Rose and, with the assistance of some pious men, ministered to their needs. In 1531 he went to Verona and persuaded the citizens to build a hospital. He opened orphanages, for boys and for girls in Brescia, Bergamo, Milan and other places in northern Italy. At Bergamo, he also founded a hostel for repentant prostitutes.

Around 1532, Jerome and two other priests established a congregation, the Clerks Regular of Somasca, dedicated to the care of orphans and the education of youth. Jerome died on February 8, 1537 from a disease he caught while tending the sick. He was canonized in 1767. In 1928, Pius XI named him the patron of orphans and abandoned children.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs