

MORNING MEDITATION

Wednesday, Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time

**Be still when stressed and pray when you are still
and you will find peace and serenity.**

Jeremiah 31:1-7

Jeremiah continued to bring hope to a people whom he described as suffering from an “incurable wound and grievous bruise”. He assured his people that the Lord has loved them with “age-old love”. The lord will deliver and restore his people. So be confident and “shout with joy”.

Response: Jeremiah 31:10-13

**Hear the word of the Lord, O nations,
Proclaim it on distant coasts and say,
He, who scattered Israel, now gathers them together,
He guards them as a shepherd gathers his flock.**

Mathew 15:21-28

This excerpt must be understood in light of the friction that continued to exist between Christians from Jewish background and pagan converts. It was basically a tension between classic Jewish exclusionism and the universal will of salvation of all people, revealed in Jesus.

This excerpt teaches us that faith breaks down barriers between Jews and Gentiles and in fact faith breaks down all barriers. “Woman, you have great faith. Your wish will come to pass”, Jesus said to the Canaanite woman.

Let your faith make you free to love all people.

Be open-minded! Cultivate respect for all. Break down barriers that keep you apart from other people and cultures and religious traditions.

**Saint of the Day, August 5 - Dedication of Saint Mary Major Basilica and
14 other saints are remembered this day**

This feast commemorates the dedication of the rebuilt Basilica Saint Mary Major by Pope Sixtus III, just after the First Council of Ephesus in 431. This major basilica, located on the summit of the Esquiline Hill in Rome, is called the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore because it is the largest church in Rome dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The original church was built during the pontificate of Pope Liberius (352–366), and is thus sometimes known as the Basilica Liberii or Basilica Liberiana. First raised at the order of Pope Liberius in the mid-fourth century, the Liberian basilica was rebuilt by Pope Sixtus III shortly after the Council of Ephesus affirmed Mary's title as Mother of God in 431. Rededicated at that time to the Mother of God, St. Mary Major is the largest church in the world honoring God through Mary. Standing atop one of Rome's seven hills, the Esquiline, it has survived many restorations without losing its character as an early Roman basilica. Its interior retains three naves divided by colonnades in the style of Constantine's era. Fifth-century mosaics on its walls testify to its antiquity.

St. Mary Major is one of the four Roman basilicas known as patriarchal cathedrals in memory of the first centers of the Church. St. John Lateran represents Rome, the See of Peter; St. Paul Outside the Walls, the See of Alexandria, allegedly the see presided over by Mark; St. Peter's, the See of Constantinople; and St. Mary's, the See of Antioch, where Mary is supposed to have spent most of her later life.

One legend, unreported before the year 1000, gives another name to this feast: Our Lady of the Snows. According to that story, a wealthy Roman couple pledged their fortune to the Mother of God. In affirmation, she produced a miraculous summer snowfall and told them to build a church on the site. The legend was long celebrated by releasing a shower of white rose petals from the basilica's dome every August 5.

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