

MORNING MEDITATION

Saturday, Second Week of Advent

**Simplicity keeps us at a distance
from every kind of deceit and double-dealing.**

(Saint Vincent de Paul)

Sirach 48:1-4; 9-11

Sirach remembers the heroes of Jewish faith and tradition. Elijah, the prophet is remembered as a fiery, spirited person with words of power which could have come only from God himself. The Jews expected that Elijah would come again. It is Elijah's return that many were waiting for. Just as he was taken up into heaven in a chariot, he would return and usher in the messianic age in which all will see the re-establishment of Israel.

Psalm 80

O Shepherd of Israel, hearken,
From your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.
Rouse your power,
and come to save us.

Mathew 17:9-13

We have seen (above) how the Jews expected Elijah to return before the Messiah came and usher in the messianic age. He would return to be the herald and the forerunner of the messiah, "Behold, I will send you Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes...he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children..." (Malachi 4:5-6). Elijah would come and restore everything before the Messiah arrived and make the world fit for the Messiah to enter into. Elijah would be the reformer!

The season of Advent calls us to reform....to renew....to change...to make ourselves and our world fit for the Messiah King to enter!

They expected Elijah to come with fire and cleanse and restore everything. They expected the coming of an avenging herald and a conquering Messiah. Jesus tried to change their concept of the Messiah. He told them that the herald and the messiah had to suffer. It was through sacrificial love that the kingdom was going to be established not through conquering armies.

Let the season of Advent remind us of the sacrificial love of Jesus for us. Let it call us to give ourselves to others in love and in sacrifice.

Saint of the day, December 10 - St. Pope Gregory III and 22 other saints are remembered this day.

Gregory was the son of a Syrian named John. He was elected pope by popular acclamation on February 11, 731 and his pontificate lasted till his death on November 28, 741. His pontificate, like that of his predecessor, was disturbed by Byzantine iconoclasm and the advance of the Lombards. He was the fifth Syrian pope and the last pope born outside of Europe for 1,272 years, until the election of Pope Francis in 2013.

After he was proclaimed Pope Gregory III, Emperor Leo III attacked the veneration of holy images. Because Leo III thought the honor paid to Jesus, Mary, and the saints by keeping statues and icons was idolatry, he condemned them and wanted them destroyed. Gregory III sent a letter to Leo III. He couldn't get the letter through because the priest-messenger was afraid to deliver it. So instead, Gregory called a synod that approved strong measures against anyone who would try to destroy images of Jesus, Mary, or the saints.

Gregory took his stand and Leo III apparently thought the only way to move him was through physical force. So, Leo sent ships to kidnap Gregory and bring him to Constantinople. Once again God intervened. A storm destroyed Leo's ships. The only thing Leo could do was capture some of the papal lands. So, Leo got a few acres of land and we kept our wonderful reminders of the love of God, the protection of Jesus, the prayers of Mary, and the examples of the saints. All because Gregory knew when to take a stand and when to stand there and let God work.

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