

MORNING MEDITATION

Wednesday, First Week of Lent

Those who practice forbearance can rise above their failures.

Jonah 3:1-10

The people of Nineveh, king, and common folks, repented, changed their ways and turned to God at the preaching of Jonah. God had compassion on the Ninevites.

The season of Lent calls us to conversion, to a change of heart. Reflect on the need for your own personal conversion!

Psalm 51

**Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness;
In your abundant compassion, blot out my offense.
Wash away all my guilt; from my sin, cleanse me.**

What offense, in your life, needs cleansing, healing and transformation?

Luke 11:29-32

They (Scribes and Pharisees) looked for God in the abnormal - in the extraordinary. Jesus constantly called people to recognize God and God's presence in the ordinary everyday experiences...in little children, in the widow's mite, in the lilies in the field, in the birds of the air.....

Jesus refused to give extraordinary signs and called the scribes and Pharisees and all his followers to find God in the ordinary things of everyday life.

Jesus presented himself, not what he did, as the sign, God's sign. Jesus is God's sign for us just as Jonah was God's sign for the Ninevites and Solomon God's sign for the Queen of Sheba.

The disciple must now become a sign of the Master.....perhaps imperfect, but still a sign that carries the message of the master..... The world must meet the Master in the disciple.

Saint of the Day, February 21 - St. Peter Damien and 34 other saints are remembered this day.

Peter was born in Ravenna around 988, the youngest of a large noble, but poor family. Orphaned early, he was at first adopted by an elder brother, who ill-treated and underfed him while employing him as a swine herd. After some years, another brother, Damianus, who was archpriest at Ravenna, had pity on him and took him away to be educated. Adding his brother's name to his own, Peter made such rapid progress in his studies of theology and canon law, first at Ravenna, then at Faenza, and finally at the University of Parma, that, around the age of 25, he was already a famous professor at Parma and Ravenna universities.

Maybe because he was orphaned and had been treated shabbily by one of his brothers, Peter Damian was very good to the poor. It was the ordinary thing for him to have a poor person or two with him at table and he liked to minister personally to their needs.

Peter was very strict with himself. He wore a hair shirt under his clothes, fasted rigorously and spent many hours in prayer. Soon, he decided to leave his teaching profession and give himself completely to prayer with the Benedictines of the reform of Saint Romuald at Fonte Avellana. Both as novice and as monk, his fervor was remarkable but led him to such extremes of self-mortification in penance that his health was affected, and he developed severe insomnia. On his recovery, he was appointed to lecture to his fellow monks and then monks of neighboring monasteries.

The abbot commanded that when he died Peter should succeed him. Abbot Peter founded five other hermitages. He encouraged his brothers to live a life of prayer and solitude and wanted nothing more for himself. The Holy See periodically called on him, however, to be a peacemaker between two abbeys in dispute or a cleric or government official in some disagreement with Rome.

Finally, Pope Stephen IX made Peter the cardinal-bishop of Ostia. He worked hard to wipe out simony (the buying of church offices) and encouraged his priests to observe celibacy and urged even the diocesan clergy to live together and maintain scheduled prayer and religious observance. He wished to restore primitive discipline among religious and priests, warning against needless travel, violations of poverty, and too comfortable living. He asked often to be allowed to retire as cardinal-bishop of Ostia, and finally Pope Alexander II consented.

Peter was happy to become once again just a monk, but he was still called to serve as a papal legate. When returning from such an assignment in Ravenna, he was overcome by a fever. With the monks gathered around him saying the Divine Office, he died on February 22, 1072. In 1828, he was declared a Doctor of the Church

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