MORNING MEDITATION

Wednesday, Thirty First Week in Ordinary Time

Every breath we take, every step we take, can be filled with peace, joy, and serenity. We need only to be awake, alive in the present moment.
(Thich Nhat Hanh)

Philippians 2:12-18

Paul encouraged the Philippians to be faithful even in his absence. He taught them to be "innocent, straightforward, children of God beyond reproach…holding fast to the word of life". He encouraged them to rejoice in their calling.

Psalm 27

The Lord is my light a d my salvation,
Whom should I fear?
The Lord is my life's refuge,
Of whom should I be afraid?
One thing I ask of the Lord, this I seek:
to dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life.

Luke 14:25-33

Jesus spoke to his followers about the cost of discipleship with startling honesty. Being a disciple could mean division, separation even from loved ones because loyalty to Christ has to take precedence over the dearest loyalties of this world.

To choose Christ could mean denial of other things and other loyalties! The disciple must be ready to take up the cross, to be regarded as a criminal and to die without glory or fame or name or wealth.

Be prepared to welcome and accept the pain and the loss that come with being faithful to your call.

Invest yourself into loving God and God's people!

Saint of the Day, November 4 - Saint Charles Borromeo and 13 other saints are remembered this day.

Saint Charles Borromeo was born on October 2, 1538, at the castle of Arona near Milan. His father was the Count of Arona and his mother a member of the House of Medici. At the age of 12, the young Count Charles Borromeo dedicated himself to a life of service

to the Church. His uncle gave to him the family income from the Benedictine abbey of Saints Gratinian and Felinus. Even as a youth, his integrity was obvious. He was explicit in telling his father that he could only keep the money required for his education and to prepare him for service to the Church. All other funds belonged to the poor of the Church and were to be passed along to them.

Charles suffered from a speech impediment that made him appear slow to those who did not know him. Despite this challenge, he performed well and impressed his teachers. He attended the University of Pavia and learned Latin. He was praised because he was hardworking and thorough. In 1554 his father passed away and although Charles was a teenager, responsibility for his household fell to him. Charles continued in his studies and earned a doctorate in canon and civil law.

His uncle, Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Medici became Pope Pius IV on December 25, 1559. The new pope asked his nephew to come to Rome and appointed him as a cardinal-deacon. With the rank came the job of assisting and advising his uncle full-time. A month later, Pope Pius IV made his nephew a cardinal. With the new rank came even more duties including the government of the Papal States, the supervision of the Knights of Malta, the Franciscans, and the Carmelites. He was only 23 years old.

Borromeo was appointed administrator of the Archdiocese of Milan in 1560. Since he would become the ecclesiastical administrator of Milan, he decided that the Lord was calling him to the priesthood.

In 1562 his brother died, and his family urged him to leave the service of the church to preserve the family name, but he refused. He became more insistent upon becoming a good bishop and in compelling others to lead exemplary lives of clerical service. Borromeo was ordained first to the order of deacon. Then, he was ordained to the holy priesthood on September 4, 1563. Then, he was ordained as a bishop on December 7, 1563. He became Archbishop of Milan on May 12, 1564.

The Protestant Reformation was spreading throughout northern Europe and constantly threatened to move south. The greatest defense against Protestant doctrinal errors and claims against the hierarchy of the Catholic Church was reform and the restoration of integrity to the Catholic Church. Archbishop Borromeo saw this clearly and he made this his mission.

His strategy was to provide education to many clergy he saw as ignorant. He founded schools and seminaries and colleges for clergy. He also ended the selling of indulgences, a form of simony, and ordered monasteries to reform themselves. His work of cleaning up the Church also made him enemies. On one occasion a member of a small, decrepit order known as the "Humiliati" attempted to assassinate him with a pistol but missed.

In 1576 a famine struck Milan followed by the plague, and many of the wealthy and powerful fled the city. Archbishop Borromeo remained. He used his own fortune to feed the starving people. When that money was spent, he took loans and went deep into debt. He may have fed 70,000 people per day. Eventually, the Archbishop convinced the local governor to return to his post and care for the people.

In 1583, Archbishop Borromeo traveled to Switzerland and began the work of suppressing heresy there. Protestant heresies, along with witchcraft and sorcery had been widely reported. He founded the Collegium Helveticum to serve and educate Swiss Catholics.

Eventually, the Archbishop's life of work and toil began to take its toll. In 1584, he became ill with a fever. He returned to Milan where his condition worsened. When it became obvious that he would die, he was given his last Sacraments. He died on November 3, at the age of 46. He was canonized by Pope Paul V on November 1, 1610.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs