MORNING MEDITATION

Saturday, Second Week of Advent

The purpose of life is to discover your gift. The work of life is to develop it. The meaning of life is to give your gift away.

(David Viscott)

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 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 13 – St. Lucy and 5 other saints are remembered this day.

The oldest record of Lucy's life and martyrdom comes from the fifth-century Acts of the Martyrs. The single fact upon which various accounts agree is that a disappointed suitor accused Lucy of being a Christian, and she was executed in Syracuse, Sicily, in the year 304 during the Diocletian Persecution. Her veneration spread to Rome, and by the 6th century to the whole Church. The oldest archaeological evidence comes from the Greek inscriptions from the catacombs of St. John in Syracuse. In medieval accounts, Saint Lucy's eyes are gouged out prior to her execution.

According to the traditional story, Lucy was born of rich and noble parents about the year 283. Her father was of Roman origin. He died when she was five years old, leaving Lucy and her mother without a protective guardian. Like many of the early martyrs, Lucy had consecrated her virginity to God, and she hoped to distribute her dowry to the poor. However, Eutychia, her mother, not knowing of Lucy's promise, and suffering from a bleeding disorder, feared for Lucy's future. She arranged Lucy's marriage to a young man of a wealthy pagan family.

Saint Agatha's shrine at Catania, less than 50 miles from Syracuse, attracted a number of pilgrims; many miracles were reported to have happened through her intercession. Eutychia made a pilgrimage to Catania, in hopes of a cure. While there, St. Agatha came to Lucy in a dream and told her that because of her faith her mother would be cured and that Lucy would be the glory of Syracuse, as she (Agatha) was of Catania. With her mother cured, Lucy took the opportunity to persuade her mother to allow her to distribute a great part of her wealth among the poor.

Eutychia suggested that the sums would make a good bequest, but Lucy decided in favor of the poor. News that the patrimony and jewels were being distributed to the poor came to Lucy's betrothed, who denounced her to Paschasius, the Governor of Syracuse. Paschasius ordered her to burn a sacrifice to the emperor's image. When she refused, Paschasius sentenced her to be defiled in a brothel. Tradition states that when the guards came to take her away, they could not move her even when they hitched her to a team of oxen. Bundles of wood were then heaped about her and set on fire, but would not burn. Finally, she met her death by the sword thrust into her throat. There are other traditions and legends about Lucy's life and martyrdom.

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