

MORNING MEDITATION

Friday, Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**Peace is present right here and now, in ourselves
and in everything we do and see.**

(Thich Nhat Hanh)

Sirach 47:2-11

This excerpt sings a song of praise to David. David was youthful and fearless and the favorite of the Lord and his people. He defeated the philistines and removed the disgrace of his people. His great love for God moved him to dream of building a temple for the Lord and develop a liturgy for worship. But he was not free from human limitations...he sinned, and he repented and received God's forgiveness and the promise that his kingdom would last forever. **Even the great men in history were not free from limitations, failures and sin. They, however, accepted their sinfulness and sought forgiveness.**

Psalms 18

**God's way is unerring,
The promise of the Lord is fire-tried'
He is a shield to all who take refuge in him.**

Mark 6:14-29

The disciples spread the good news. They proclaimed the name of Jesus and the message that he brought. Herod heard about Jesus and became curious: "who is this man that I hear about? Could he be John the Baptist?" In this excerpt, Mark tells us the story of the beheading of John the Baptist. Herod feared John and respected him at the same time. It was as though he was haunted by the goodness of John and his own sinfulness at the same time. Herod could not escape the call of goodness and virtue...he was afraid! Herod acted on impulse, afraid of what people might think or say...

Herod was afraid and acted out of that fear..... **Choices made out of fear can be very destructive. Be wise and discerning in making choices.**

Herodias shows us what jealousy and bitterness can do to a person... **Choices made out of jealousy, anger, bitterness, etc. can be very destructive. Be wise and discerning in making choices.**

John the Baptist shows us what courage and faithfulness can do. His life also reveals to

us the cost of such courage and faithfulness. **Reflect on the character and the virtue of John the Baptist and get in touch with what they call forth from you.**

Saint of the day, February 6 - St. Paul Miki & Companions and 28 other saints are remembered this day.

Paul Miki was born into the family of a rich Japanese military leader at Tounucumada, Japan. He had his education at the Jesuit college of Anziquama. He joined the Jesuits in 1580 and began his education and formation to the priesthood. In 1587, Emperor Hideyoshi of Japan ordered the banishment of all Catholics, forcing the Jesuit missionaries to operate from hiding. In 1596, Hideyoshi rounded up twenty-six Christians. Miki was jailed along with other Christians. He and his Christian companions were forced to walk about 600 miles from Kyoto as a punishment for the whole community. On the way they sang the Te Deum, the Church's hymn of praise and thanksgiving. Finally, they arrived at Nagasaki, the city which had the most conversions to Christianity. Paul, still a Jesuit scholastic, at the age of 35, was crucified on February 5, 1597, along with 25 other Catholics.

While hanging upon a cross, Paul Miki preached to the people gathered for the execution: "The sentence of judgment says these men came to Japan from the Philippines, but I did not come from any other country. I am a true Japanese. The only reason for my being killed is that I have taught the doctrine of Christ. I certainly did teach the doctrine of Christ. I thank God it is for this reason I die. I believe that I am telling only the truth before I die. I know you believe me and I want to say to you all once again: Ask Christ to help you to become happy. I obey Christ. After Christ's example I forgive my persecutors. I do not hate them. I ask God to have pity on all, and I hope my blood will fall on my fellow men as a fruitful rain."

Together with him died Santiago Kisai, also a Jesuit scholastic, and Diego Kisai (or Kizayemon), a Jesuit brother, in addition to 22 priests and lay people. This took place during the persecution of Christians under the Taiko, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who ruled Japan in the name of the emperor. All were canonized as the Martyrs of Japan by Pope Pius IX in 1862.

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