

MORNING MEDITATION

Friday, Fifth Week of Lent

To be steadfast is to be firm in purpose, resolute, unwavering, tenacious, faithful and loyal just as our God is.

Jeremiah 20:10-13

The Prophet is constantly surrounded by the wicked - even his friends turned against him. They are on the watch to catch him saying or doing something false. But Jeremiah stands strong, even in desperate moments and affirms his faith: "the Lord is with me like a mighty champion".

Psalms 18

**In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried out to my God;
From his temple he heard my voice and my cry to him reached his ears.**

John 10:31-42

Jesus was surrounded by hostile forces trying to catch him in something that they can use against him. But Jesus stood his ground, ever faithful to his Father's will.

It was in the midst of hostile forces that Jeremiah and Jesus had to remain faithful to their call. They had to face the absence of comfort, consolation, encouragement and support. They had to face loneliness. Jeremiah called the people to conversion and change. They hardened their hearts and responded with hatred. The experience of Jesus was the same and more. They were sustained by deep awareness of the presence of God in their life. Their strength was in that experience of intimacy: "the Lord is with me like a mighty champion" said Jeremiah; "the Father is in me and I in Him", said Jesus.

The daily cost of discipleship can weigh heavy on us. Great is the temptation to give up and join the crowd. We can get lost in what others say and do and value. We need wisdom and courage to stand strong. The same spirit that strengthened and sustained Jeremiah and Jesus dwells in us. We need to trust the Spirit within us and be empowered by that Spirit.

Pray for courage and wisdom to face difficult situation. Pray for those who have to live in hostile situation. Remember those who have heavy burden to carry. Remember the innocent, especially children and the helpless who have to suffer without support.

Saint of the Day, March 31 - St. Benjamin and 7 other saints are remembered this day.

Benjamin was born in Iran around the year 329. We do not have information about his early life. He was a deacon martyred around 424 in Persia. He was executed during a period of persecution of Christians that lasted forty years and through the reign of two Persian kings. The persecution began in response to the burning of the Temple of Fire, the great sanctuary of the Persians, by Bishop Abdas in 420. King Isdegerd threatened to destroy all the churches of the Christians unless the Bishop would rebuild it.

Abdas refused to comply and the threat was executed. Churches were demolished, Abdas himself was put to death, and a general persecution began which lasted forty years. Isdegerd died in 421, but his son and successor, Varanes, carried on the persecution with great fury. The Christians were submitted to the cruelest tortures.

Benjamin was imprisoned for a year for his Christian faith, and later released with the condition that he abandons preaching or speaking of his religion. His release was obtained by the Eastern Roman Emperor Theodosius II through an ambassador. However, Benjamin declared that it was his duty to preach about Christ and that he could not be silent. As a consequence, he was tortured mercilessly until his death in the year 424 in Persia.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs