

MORNING MEDITATION

Saturday, Fifth Week of Lent

**Be still! Slow down! Close your eyes! Take a deep breath! Open your eyes!
Behold, the world is still here!**

Ezekiel 37:21-28

The Prophet Ezekiel proclaims a new “hope” for his, alienated and suffering people. God was going to do something very new: there would be one God, one nation, one covenantal people, one temple and one law. Yahweh was doing it – establishing an eternal covenant of peace. “I will be their God and they shall be my people”.

Pray for unity and harmony among all peoples and nations.

Jeremiah 31:10-13

**He who scatters Israel now gathers them together,
He guards them as a shepherd his flock.....
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will console and gladden them after their sorrows.**

John 11:45-57

Hatred of the Jews for Jesus increased day by day. The Sanhedrin met to discuss about what had to be done with Jesus. These were people who did not know what was good for them and did not know how to receive blessings and grace.

Be open to the blessings and grace which God sends through unexpected sources.

Caiaphas proposed that it was better for one man to die than for the whole nation to be destroyed. He was thinking of the death of Jesus to avoid trouble with the Romans.

Jesus was to die for the nation and for all of God’s people.

In response to this, Jesus withdrew from that region with the disciples and did not move freely in Jewish circles. The Jews wondered whether Jesus would come for the Passover festival. The authorities had made plans to apprehend Jesus.

Jesus was not reckless. He discerned and waited in patience for his time to come according the plan of His Father. Be discerning! Wait patiently...with open arms!

Saint of the day, March 28 - St. Catherine of Bologna and 12 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Catherine was born on September 8, 1413, in Bologna, Italy to an aristocratic family. Her father, a diplomat to the Marquis of Ferrara, sent her to court when she was 11 to be a companion to the Marquis' daughter, Princess Margarita. At the time, the city of Ferrara was becoming a cultural center, and so the young girls had an excellent education in music, literature, painting, and dancing. Catherine particularly excelled at miniature painting, Latin, and the viola.

When Margarita became engaged, she wanted Catherine to remain her companion, but Catherine felt called to the religious life. At 14, she became a Franciscan Tertiary, an order of lay women who followed the ways of St. Francis. A few years later, dissension in the community led Catherine and others to join the Poor Clares, a contemplative order founded by St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. Catherine willingly served in the humbler roles at the convent, including laundress, baker, and caretaker to the animals.

In 1456, she and 15 other sisters were sent to establish a Poor Clare monastery in Florence. As abbess, Catharine worked to preserve the peace of the new community. Her reputation for holiness drew many young women to the Poor Clare life. She continued in her artistic pursuits, playing the viola (even on her deathbed), painting religious pictures (her painting of St. Ursula hangs today in a gallery in Venice), copying out and illuminating her breviary (once belonging to Pius IX and now on display at Oxford), and writing spiritual guides and poetry.

At age 49, she became gravely ill and died on March 9, 1463 in Bologna. As was the custom of the Poor Clares, she was buried without a coffin. She was exhumed 18 days later after visitors noticed a sweet smell coming from her grave and some experienced miracles. Her body was found to be flexible and uncorrupted. Six hundred years later, her body remains intact. Her skin has blackened from exposure to oil lamps and soot, but still she sits, clothed in her nun's robes, on a golden throne behind a glass case in the Church of the Saint in Bologna. She was canonized in 1712.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs