

MORNING MEDITATION

Thursday, Twenty Eighth Week in Ordinary Time

**Bless yourself with your gift of forgiveness
and let this gift fill you with peace and serenity!**

Ephesians 1:1-10

Paul tells the Ephesians: God chose us before the world began to be holy and blameless in his sight, to be full of love...God has given us wisdom to understand fully the mystery, the plan he was pleased to decree in Christ.....to bring all things into one in Christ!

Psalm 98

**Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things;
his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.
The LORD has made his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.**

Luke 11:47-54

The Scribes were experts in the law, but they did not keep them themselves because they were experts in evasions as well. They professed a deep admiration for the prophets. But the prophets they admired were dead. They honored the dead with tombs and memorials and dishonored the living.

The Scribes shut people off from Scripture. Their interpretation was so fantastic that it was impossible for the ordinary man to understand it. In their hands, scripture became a book of riddles. They were experts in the scripture, but to the common man it remained a dark mystery.

There are still those who demand from others standards they themselves refuse to follow. There are still those whose religion is nothing but legalism. There are still those who make the word of God so difficult that the seeking mind of the common man is bewildered and does not know what to believe or to whom to turn.

May we never be bound or chained by our doctrines or ideals or practices or customs or traditions! May we be free to seek! May we remain open to let God's word unfold God's truth and wisdom! May we never chain God's word!

Saint of the Day, October 15 - St. Teresa of Avila and 13 other saints are

remembered this day

Teresa Sánchez de Cepeda y Ahumada was born on March 28, 1515, Ávila, Spain. Her father, Alonso Sánchez de Cepeda, was a successful wool merchant and one of the wealthiest men in Ávila. He bought a knighthood and assimilated successfully into Christian society. Teresa's mother brought her up as a dedicated Christian. Fascinated by accounts of the lives of the saints, she ran away from home at age seven, with her brother Rodrigo, to seek martyrdom in the fight against the Moors. Her uncle brought them home when he spotted them just outside the town walls.

When Teresa was eleven years old, her mother died, leaving her grief-stricken. This prompted her to embrace a deeper devotion to the Virgin Mary as her spiritual mother. Teresa was sent to the Augustinian nuns' school at Ávila. Illness forced her to leave the convent during her second year. But the influence of her devout uncle Peter, along with her reading of the letters of the monk and Church Father St. Jerome, convinced Teresa that the surest road to salvation lay in forsaking marriage, property, and worldly pleasures completely. Against the will of her father, who wanted her to postpone the decision, she joined the Carmelite Order.

Teresa became a professed member of the order at age 20, but soon developed a serious illness that forced her to return home. She experienced severe pain and physical paralysis for two years and was expected to die when she went into a coma for four days. But she insisted on returning to the Carmelite monastery as soon as she was able, even though she remained in a painful and debilitated state.

For the next three years the young nun made remarkable progress in her spiritual life, developing the practice of recalling herself into the presence of God through quiet contemplation. As her health returned, however, Teresa lapsed into a more routine prayer life. While she remained an obedient Carmelite, she would not re-establish this close personal connection to God for almost twenty years.

When she was nearly 40, however, Teresa found herself dramatically called back to the practice of contemplative mental prayer. She experienced profound changes within her own soul, and remarkable visions that seemed to come from God. Under the direction of her confessors, Teresa wrote about some of these experiences in an autobiography that she completed in 1565.

Teresa played a significant role in the renewal of the Church that followed the Council of Trent. She proposed a return of the Carmelites to their original rule of life, a simple and austere form of monasticism – founded on silence and solitude – that had received papal approval in the 12th century and was believed to date back to the Old Testament prophet Elijah.

Together with her close collaborator, the priest and writer later canonized as Saint John of the Cross, she founded what is known today as the Order of Discalced Carmelites – “discalced,” meaning barefoot, symbolizing the simplicity to which they chose to return the order after a

period of corruption. The reform met with fierce opposition but resulted in the founding of 30 monasteries during her life.

Teresa's health failed her for the last time while she was traveling through Salamanca in 1582. She accepted her dramatic final illness as God's chosen means of calling her into his presence forever. She died on October 15, 1582. She was canonized on March 22, 1622, along with three of her greatest contemporaries: St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Francis Xavier, and St. Philip Neri. In 1970, Pope St. Paul VI proclaimed St. Teresa as a Doctor of the Church, along with the 14th century Dominican St. Catherine of Siena.

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