

# **MORNING MEDITATION**

## **Wednesday, First Week of Lent**

**Our trust in God's presence with us brings us serenity  
even in the midst of storm.**

### **Jonah 3:1-10**

The people of Nineveh, king and common folks, repented, changed their ways and turned to God at the preaching of Jonah. God had compassion on the Ninevites.

**The season of Lent calls us to conversion, to a change of heart. Reflect on the need for your own personal conversion!**

### **Psalm 51**

**Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness;  
In your abundant compassion, blot out my offense.  
Wash away all my guilt; from my sin, cleanse me.**

### **Luke 11:29-32**

They (Scribes and Pharisees) looked for God in the abnormal - in the extraordinary. Jesus constantly called people to recognize God and God's presence in the ordinary everyday experiences...in little children, in the widow's mite, in the lilies of the field, in the birds of the air.....

Jesus refused to give extraordinary signs and called the scribes and Pharisees and all his followers to find God in the ordinary things of everyday life. Jesus presented himself, not what he did, as the sign, God's sign. Jesus is God's sign for us just as Jonah was God's sign for the Ninevites and Solomon God's sign for the Queen of Sheba.

**The disciple must now become a sign of the Master.....perhaps imperfect, but still a sign that carries the message of the master..... The world must meet the Master in the disciple.**

**Saint of the Day, February 25 - Blessed Sebastian of Aparicio and 15 other saints are remembered this day.**

Sebastian de Aparicio y del Prado was born on January 20, 1502 in the Galician region of Spain. He was the third child and only son of Juan de Aparicio and Teresa del Prado, who were poor, but pious peasants, and spent his childhood tending sheep and cattle. He learned

his prayers from his parents, but had no schooling, and was not able to read or write. When Aparicio was older, he sought work outside his region in order to help support his family and to provide dowries for his sisters. He finally decided to improve his fortune by traveling to the newly conquered Americas. He sailed from Spain, landing in Veracruz later that year and settled in Puebla. Aparicio began to cultivate indigenous maize but also European wheat. He was one of the first Spaniards who raised and trained cattle to use in plow farming and transportation.

Realizing the difficulty of transporting supplies in Mexico, and between growing Spanish settlements, he promoted building roads and a highway to connect the silver mining city of Zacatecas with Mexico City. . He established the transport system which sent agricultural products to Spain and brought necessary items to the residents of New Spain.

Aparicio prospered, becoming a wealthy man. He, however, had never lost his commitment to a life of faith. He followed a very ascetic way of life, sleeping on the ground and eating the poorest foods. His charity extended to all, giving much of his wealth to those in need, and lending money without asking anything in return. Eventually feeling pressured to marry, at the age of 60 he became engaged to a young woman who had no hopes of finding a husband, due to her lack of a dowry. They agreed to practice a white marriage, not consummating the union. Though she was much younger, his wife died a year later. He married again two years after that, with the same arrangement, only to lose his second wife by the time he was 70.

Shortly after being widowed for the second time, Aparicio grew seriously ill and began to re-assess his life. Feeling a call to enter the consecrated life, he frequently visited the Franciscan friars and finally decided to apply to the friars to be admitted as a lay brother. He received the religious habit of a friar on June 9, 1574, at the age of 72 and made his profession of religious vows on June 13, 1575. As he was still illiterate, his document of commitment had to be signed by a fellow friar, Alfonso Peinado. At the friary, over the course of the following year, he held the offices of cook, sacristan, gardener and porter. He also was assigned to be the quaestor of the community, the one assigned to travel throughout the local community, seeking food and alms for the upkeep of the friars and those who came to them for help. The builder of Mexico's highway system had become a beggar on it.

Aparicio was given an oxcart with two oxen to travel through the city and the surrounding villages. He lived on the road for days, sleeping on the ground under the cart in bad weather. He would spend his time meditating on the Passion and on the teachings and example of St. Francis of Assisi. He spent the last 26 years of his life in this way. On the evening of February 25, 1600, Aparicio asked to be laid on the ground to meet his death, in imitation of St. Francis. He soon died in the arms of a fellow Galician, Friar Juan de San Buenaventura, with his last word being "Jesus". Sebastian was beatified in 1787 and is known as a patron of travelers.

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