

MORNING MEDITATION

Monday, First Week of Lent

Radiate an energy of serenity and peace so that you have an uplifting effect on those you come into contact with.

(Wayne Dyer)

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18

Moses calls the people to be holy because the Lord is holy. Such holiness requires not only reverence for God but also deep respect for self and others, even other's property. Moses spells out the details of the Covenant with God. Deep reverence for God must reflect: Deep reverence for people; Deep reverence for self; Deep reverence for creation. **Reflect on your sense of reverence for God and for all that is God's!**

Psalm 19

**May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart,
Find favor before you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.**

Mathew 25:31-46

The final judgment is not about how you kept the rules and how many prayers you said. It is about how you treated those in need and why you treated them the way you did. The good that is done for others is not because others needed your "good" or because there was a reward for doing good but because you couldn't help but do the good. Being good and doing good, being generous and doing the generous thing, being compassionate and doing the compassionate thing...etc. is your nature, your character, your quality. **It just reflects who you are!**

There can be no holiness without concern for others, especially the needy, the disadvantaged, the poor.....We can not love God without loving others in truth. Loving in truth is to love as God loves, to reflect God's love. This means that **we must love those who can not love in return and those who can not love the way we have learned to love.** **To be holy is to love** - this love is unconditional, non-judgmental and accepting. Jesus says love is beyond piety and good deeds. Our love must cross the boundaries and break barriers.

We minister to the Lord when we minister to each other and to all in need, without even realizing that we are ministering to the Lord.

Saint of the Day, February 23 - St. Polycarp and 89 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Polycarp was born around 69 C.E. but we know little else of his childhood and youth. He was a member of that small band of “Apostolic Fathers”, the immediate followers of the Apostles. He was a disciple of St. John, the “Beloved Disciple” of Jesus. A letter from Saint John to Polycarp has survived. Soon after the death of St. John, Polycarp was named the Bishop of Smyrna (now Turkey).

Tradition tells us that Polycarp actually kissed the chains of the great St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch as the latter passed by Smyrna en route to martyrdom. St. Ignatius also wrote a letter to Polycarp which is still extant. Polycarp instructed St. Irenaeus (famous for his work Against Heresies) and Papias of Hierapolis, the important early Scripture scholar. He traveled all the way to Rome to meet with Pope Saint Anicetus to work out when, exactly, Easter should be observed each year.

Polycarp was an unrelenting defender of the orthodox faith especially against the heresies known as Valentinianism and Marcionism, both of which were types of Gnosticism. He was an “Apostolic Father,” a disciple of St. John, a defender of orthodoxy, the bishop of Smyrna, the friend of Ignatius of Antioch and Pope Anicetus, teacher and letter-writer and a sort of bridge between the Eastern and Western Churches.

In the sixth year of Marcus Aurelius, a violent persecution broke out in Asia in which the faithful gave heroic proof of their courage. When the chief of police, Herod, sent horsemen by night to surround his lodging, Polycarp was upstairs in bed, but refused to make his escape saying, ‘God’s Will be done.’ He went down, met them at the door, ordered them supper, and desired only some time in prayer before he went with them. At 86, Polycarp was led into the crowded Smyrna stadium to be burned alive. The flames did not harm him and he was finally killed by a dagger. The centurion ordered the saint’s body burned. He died in 155.

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