

MORNING MEDITATION

Saturday, Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**Take small steps towards fulfilling your purpose,
instead of aiming for immediate results.**

(St. Francis de Sales)

Hebrews 13:15-17, 20-21

This excerpt encourages us to praise God constantly through Jesus and to do good deeds generously and graciously. We are called to pray for our leaders and make it a joy for them to lead us. The most important thing is that those who lead and those who follow, together, do God's will, do all that is pleasing to God.

Psalm 23

**The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
Beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.
He guides me in right paths for his name's sake.....**

Mark 6:30-34

Jesus had sent out his disciples on their first mission. They returned from their mission and began to tell him about their accomplishments. Jesus, gently and quietly, invited them to a "deserted place" to rest a while. From the very beginning of their ministry, Jesus taught the disciples about the need for time, away from work and service projects, the need for time to rest, relax, pray...time for peace...time to spend with their master...to abide in him. The disciple must go from the master to fulfill the master's mission and must return to the master to be strengthened and filled again with the master's wisdom.

The "busyness", the trials, the testing times, the challenges, etc. of the mission can stifle the spirit and become burdens heavy to carry. One can become so busy with the master's work that he/she can forget the master himself. It is easy to lose focus. It is urgent to maintain focus, to be centered again and again on God and God's way.

"If the heart wanders or is distracted, bring it back quite gently and place it tenderly in God's presence. And if you do nothing else while at prayer but bring your heart back again and again and place it in God's presence.....though it went away every time you brought it back, your time of prayer would be very well spent" (Introduction to Devout Life, St. Francis De Sales).

Saint of the Day, February 8 - St. Jerome Emiliani and 13 other saints are remembered this day.

Jerome was born in Venice in 1486. His father died when he was a teenager and he ran away at the age of 15 to join the army. He was appointed governor of a fortress in the mountains of Treviso, and while defending his post he was taken prisoner. In prison Jerome had a lot of time to think, and he gradually learned how to pray. He had not cared about God, but he attributed his escape to the intercession of the Mother of God; and he made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Treviso, in fulfillment of a vow, and left his chains as an offering.

When he escaped, he returned to Venice where he took charge of the education of his nephews and began his own studies for the priesthood. In the years after his ordination, events again called Jerome to a decision and a new lifestyle.

All his spare time was devoted to the study of theology and to works of charity. In the year of plague and famine (1528), he seemed to be everywhere and showed his zeal, especially for the orphans, whose number had so greatly increased. Jerome began caring for the sick and feeding the hungry at his own expense. He rented a house for them near the church of St. Rose and, with the assistance of some pious men, ministered to their needs. In 1531 he went to Verona and persuaded the citizens to build a hospital. He opened orphanages, for boys and for girls in Brescia, Bergamo, Milan and other places in northern Italy. At Bergamo, he also founded a hostel for repentant prostitutes.

Around 1532, Jerome and two other priests established a congregation, the Clerks Regular of Somasca, dedicated to the care of orphans and the education of youth. Jerome died on February 8, 1537 from a disease he caught while tending the sick. He was canonized in 1767. In 1928, Pius XI named him the patron of orphans and abandoned children.

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