

MORNING MEDITATION

Monday, First Week of Advent

**Steadfast love demands
a lifelong habit of saying “yes” to God’s plan and purpose.**

Isaiah 2:1-5

Isaiah has a beautiful vision of the Lord’s house being established as the highest of all mountains, raised above all hills, to which all nations would come. On this mountain, a sense of brotherhood, harmony and peace would come..... all instruments of destruction would be turned into creative instruments, “sword into plowshares.....spears into pruning hooks.....” From this vision came the call of Isaiah to “walk in the light of the Lord”.

Be people of hope! Work for peace and harmony! Walk in the light of the Lord!

Psalm 122

**I rejoiced when I heard them say:
let us go to the house of the Lord.
And now we have set our foot
within your gates, O Jerusalem.**

Matthew 8:5-11

Centurions were the finest men in the Roman army. The centurion mentioned in this excerpt was a man of honor. Even his attitude toward his servant was extraordinary - he was grieved that his servant was ill, and he was determined to do everything to save him. This was the reverse of the normal attitude of Master to his slave. How different people are! And how easy it becomes for us to judge and put everyone into one square box.

This calls us to overcome our prejudices and learn to go beyond common perceptions to discovering truth.

This centurion was also a man of extraordinary faith. He wanted Jesus to heal his slave. But he had a problem - he was a Gentile and Jesus was a Jew and Jews didn’t enter the house of Gentiles. He was a noble man, and his faith was great. So, he could say, “you don’t need to come - just say the word”. This was the voice of faith. And so, Jesus declared faith as the “door” to the feast in the kingdom of God. The Jews had to learn that access to God’s presence was not a matter of membership in any nation, but faith.

Faith has the power to break down barriers. Let your faith break down fears, doubts, prejudices...

Saint of the Day, December 4 - Saint John Damascene and 19 other saints are remembered this day.

John was a Byzantine monk and priest, born and raised in Damascus around the year 675 or 676. He received a classical and theological education, and followed his father in a government position under the Arabs. After a few years, he resigned and went to the Monastery of Saint Sabas near Jerusalem and spent most of his life in this Monastery.

Eastern Orthodox Christian traditions and Eastern Catholic traditions have been particularly shaped by his insights. Among Eastern Christians, St. John is best known for his defense of Christian sacred art, particularly in the form of icons. While the churches of Rome and Constantinople were still united during St. John's life, the Byzantine Emperor Leo III broke radically from the ancient tradition of the church, charging that the veneration of Christian icons was a form of idolatry.

St. John began publicly opposing the emperor's command against sacred images in a series of writings. His argument was that Christians did not actually worship images, but rather, through them they worshiped God, and honored the memory of the saints and that by taking an incarnate physical form, Christ had given warrant to the Church's depiction of him in images.

He is famous for his treatise, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, a summary of the Greek Fathers, of which he became the last. He is known as a poet, one of the two greatest of the Eastern Church, the other being Romanus the Melodist. His devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and his sermons on her feasts are well known. He died at his monastery, Mar Saba, near Jerusalem on December 4, 749.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs