

MORNING MEDITATION

Saturday after Epiphany

Our purpose is to be and to become what God made us to be...to be his image, to image him where he has placed us.

1 John 5:14-21

John says that we can be confident that God hears our prayer when we ask for anything according to His will. He says that we belong to God...we are birthed by him...we are not of the world; we are only in the world. God has given us the wisdom in Jesus to discern what is good and right and just according to God's will.

Psalm 149

**Sing to the Lord a new song,
Of praise in the assembly of the faithful.
Let Israel be glad in their maker,
Let the children of Zion rejoice in their king.**

John 3:22-30

The disciples of John the Baptist wanted to know what he thought about Jesus baptizing across the Jordan and people flocking around him. John the Baptist claimed that one "greater than I" was coming. When "greater than I" came, he (John the Baptist) stepped aside and said: "he must increase, I must decrease". He chose to take the second place.

John saw his mission as preparing the way of the Lord. He called people to conversion and to wait for the good news. John was unafraid of "disappearing" - of not being recognized or admired or being the center of attention.

For many of us, being quiet, unassuming and humble becomes very difficult as we tend to crave for attention, recognition, acceptance, etc. from others. Desiring other's "increase" and stepping aside so that another may take credit or honor becomes a problem for many of us. Reflect on "stepping aside" and letting others have the honor!

John gave his testimony about who Jesus was and is for him. He testified that Jesus was the one God sent to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Reflect on your call to testify to who Jesus is for you in your own way where you are, in the context your own personal life!

Saint of the Day, January 11 - St. Theodosius the Great, the Cenobiarch and 23 other saints are remembered this day.

Theodosius was born at Garissus, Cappadocia (modern Turkey), in 423. He undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and after meeting with the famed St. Simeon Stylites, he entered a monastery. He was the founder of cenobitic monasticism. With deep desire for the solitary life, he settled in Palestine into a desolate cave, in which, according to Tradition, the three Magi had spent the night, having come to worship the Savior after His Nativity. He lived there for thirty years in great abstinence and unceasing prayer. People flocked to the ascetic, wishing to live under his guidance. When the cave could no longer hold all the monks, Saint Theodosius prayed that the Lord Himself would indicate a place for the monks. Taking a censer with cold charcoal and incense, the monk started walking into the desert.

At a certain spot the charcoal ignited by itself and the incense smoke began to rise. Here the monk established the first cenobitic monastery, or Lavra (meaning "broad" or "populous"). Soon the Lavra of Saint Theodosius became renowned, and up to 700 monks gathered at it. According to the final testament of Saint Theodosius, the Lavra rendered service to neighbors, giving aid to the poor and providing shelter for wanderers.

Saint Theodosius was extremely compassionate. Once, when there was a famine in Palestine and a multitude of people gathered at the monastery, the monk gave orders to allow everyone into the monastery enclosure. His disciples were annoyed, knowing that the monastery did not have the means to feed all those who had come. But when they went into the bakery, they saw that through the prayers of the abba, it was filled with bread.

At the monastery, Saint Theodosius built a home for taking in strangers, separate infirmaries for monks and laymen, and also a shelter for the dying. Seeing that people from various lands gathered at the Lavra, the saint arranged for services in the various languages: Greek, Georgian and Armenian. All gathered to receive the Holy Mysteries in the large church, where divine services were chanted in Greek.

During the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius (491-518) there arose the heresy of Eutychius and Severus, which recognized neither the sacraments nor the clergy. The emperor accepted the false teaching, and the Orthodox began to suffer persecution. Saint Theodosius stood firmly in defense of Orthodoxy and wrote a letter to the emperor on behalf of the monks, in which they denounced him and refuted the heresy with the teachings of the Ecumenical Councils. The emperor showed restraint for a short while, but then he renewed his persecution of the Orthodox. Leaving the monastery, Theodosius came to Jerusalem and in the church, he stood at the high place and cried out for all to hear: "Whoever does not honor the four Ecumenical Councils, let him be

anathema!" For this bold deed the monk was sent to prison, but soon returned after the death of the emperor.

Before his death, Saint Theodosius summoned to him three beloved bishops and revealed to them that he would soon depart to the Lord. After three days, he died at the age of 105 in 529. The saint's body was buried with reverence in the cave in which he lived at the beginning of his ascetic life.

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