

MORNING MEDITATION

Friday, Third Week of Lent

**When you are inspired by some great purpose,
all your thoughts break their bounds.**

Hosea 14:2-10

The Prophet calls his people to turn away from sinful ways and return to the Lord. He proclaims God as a God of compassion, forgiveness and healing. Hosea says to his people that God will make them a new people and bless them with prosperity. He calls them to walk in the path of the Lord in justice and “blossom like the Lilly and the Vine”.

The season of Lent continues to invite us to listen to the call of Hosea to conversion and new life and new beginnings.

Psalms 81

Sing joyfully to God our strength, acclaim the God of Jacob.....

Take up a melody and sound the timbrel...the pleasant harp and the lyre.....

Mark 12:28-34

Jesus sums up the law and the prophets into “LOVE” - love with our whole being. As St. Augustine puts it, it is only in loving God with our whole being that we come to love our life, self and others in the proper way.

By loving God and walking in His ways, we do not use others to meet our needs or exploit them for our purposes. By centering on God’s love, we are liberated to love everything as God’s gifts. We come to experience ourselves as loved and gifted. We no longer need to prove our worth.

We are loved by “LOVE”. We are accepted by Total, Unconditional Acceptance.

Lent calls us to reflect on our commitments and loyalties. We don’t have to choose between loving God and others. We are to love God, ourselves and others. Commitment and loyalty to God include love of self and others. Love of God does not divide. Love heals, unifies, integrates, brings Wholeness and Holiness.

Love of God does not turn us away from the world - love opens our eyes to see the world as God’s gift to us. Love gives us a new, clearer and true vision of the world.

Saint of the day, March 28 - St. Catherine of Bologna and 12 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Catherine was born on September 8, 1413, in Bologna, Italy to an aristocratic family. Her father, a diplomat to the Marquis of Ferrara, sent her to court when she was 11 to be a companion to the Marquis' daughter, Princess Margarita. At the time, the city of Ferrara was becoming a cultural center, and so the young girls had an excellent education in music, literature, painting, and dancing. Catherine particularly excelled at miniature painting, Latin, and the viola.

When Margarita became engaged, she wanted Catherine to remain her companion, but Catherine felt called to the religious life. At 14, she became a Franciscan Tertiary, an order of lay women who followed the ways of St. Francis. A few years later, dissension in the community led Catherine and others to join the Poor Clares, a contemplative order founded by St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. Catherine willingly served in the humbler roles at the convent, including laundress, baker, and caretaker to the animals. In 1456, she and 15 other sisters were sent to establish a Poor Clare monastery in Florence. As abbess, Catherine worked to preserve the peace of the new community. Her reputation for holiness drew many young women to the Poor Clare life. She continued in her artistic pursuits, playing the viola (even on her deathbed), painting religious pictures (her painting of St. Ursula hangs today in a gallery in Venice), copying out and illuminating her breviary (once belonging to Pius IX and now on display at Oxford), and writing spiritual guides and poetry.

At age 49, she became gravely ill and died on March 9, 1463 in Bologna. As was the custom of the Poor Clares, she was buried without a coffin. She was exhumed 18 days later after visitors noticed a sweet smell coming from her grave and some experienced miracles. Her body was found to be flexible and uncorrupted. Six hundred years later, her body remains intact. Her skin has blackened from exposure to oil lamps and soot, but still she sits, clothed in her nun's robes, on a golden throne behind a glass case in the Church of the Saint in Bologna. She was canonized in 1712.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs