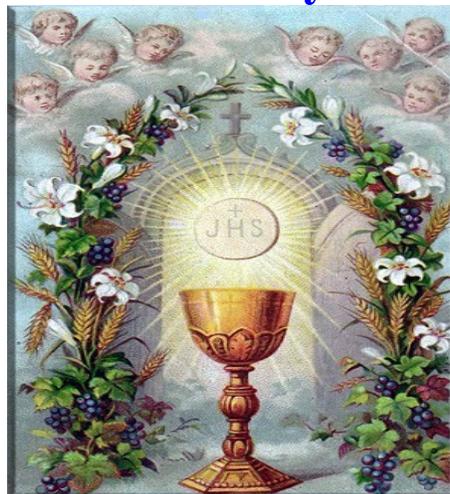


“ Thus says the Lord: Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is: and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.” - Jeremiah; Chap. 6, Vs. 16

THE MEDITATION

December 21st, A.D. 2014

The Fourth Sunday In Advent



The Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians: Chapter 4, Verses 4-7

The 1928 Book of Common Prayer, Page 95

The People's Anglican Missal, Page A 15

St. Joseph Continuous Sunday Missal (1958 edition); Page 42

MY PEACE I GIVE

The Epistle last Sunday, was brief but full of nourishment for the spirit. This Sunday's is even shorter, but just as fulfilling. Today's Epistle was written by St. Paul, to the people of the city of Phillipi (in Macedonia, Greece), when Paul was in prison awaiting his trial before the Emperor. The outcome was not known at the time of this writing, but as a Roman citizen, Paul was insured a fair and proper trial before the Emperor. Despite the gloom of prison and the uncertainty of the immediate future, this letter breathes nothing but *love, peace, and joy*. St. Paul, as he writes, is so united with Christ that nothing can cast him down or shake the confidence in his hope.

The chief theme of today's Epistle is *the peace of God*.

That peace is the peace of soul which comes from the consciousness of belonging altogether to God, of being hidden away as it were, in God, and thus sheltered from the tormenting cares and worries of worldly life. We cannot deny that each of us carries our own burdens that come with trying to make our way through this life, often, with surprises around every corner . . . surprises that can really hurt. There's a foretaste of Heaven in God's peace. It is that peace that Jesus left as a legacy to His Apostles; "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*" (St. John; Chap. 14, Vs. 27). Christ imparts HIS PEACE, a peace that cannot be found in the world, or other people, or worldly things, but that peace "*which passeth all understanding.*" such descriptive words, so full of hope!

A great joy springs out of that peace which passes all of our understanding; for if God is with us, who is against us? The joy that comes from the peace of a good conscience is the *only* true joy. Those who chase after the pleasures and enjoyment of worldly things will never know real happiness, and the more they search for pleasure via whatever medium they choose, the more completely real gladness eludes them. They will one day come to the end and will echo the words of a song made popular by Miss Peggy Lee, in the early 1960's, saying: "*Is that all there is?*" Sadly, this is the course much of the world has charted for itself today.

Sin is utterly destructive to peace of soul. There are other forces which, while not immediately subversive to our soul's peace, may diminish it, and perhaps, over time, will at last destroy it. These forces are: the malice of others, and the cares of life.

The world is cynical and suspicious, no question about that. It readily mocks and sneers at goodness. One need not look very far to see goodness and virtue parodied in negative fashion today. It's almost a requisite quality to be considered "hip" nowadays. Pious living is seen as a sign of weakness, or as a clever hypocrisy by the so-called "*illuminati*". Nearly a whole generation of young people have been raised to think that faith is not an important facet in their lives, and that God is where one finds Him, and everything is relative . . . so long as no one gets hurt... Really? *Is that all there is?*

This *must not* disturb the Christian's peace of soul. He or she knows that God is near, very near, and that their own conscience is right. They meet the suspicions and unfairness of the world with a sweet reasonableness and a gentleness no malice can withstand. To ALL – *without exception*; the true Christian displays a spirit of understanding and gentleness. Those who are genuinely happy should seek to have their happiness shared by others. Our light, through witness by our outward love to one another, and to those we meet everyday, will shine forth in a world, that while being encroached on by a great darkness, seeks that light . . . whether it realizes it or not. Our peace of soul becomes part of that Light.

“ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (St. Matthew: Ch. 5, Vs. 6)

3.

DO NOT WORRY- BE AT PEACE

St. Paul also tells us today to: *“Be careful for nothing”* that is; “Don't be over anxious in anything” Avoid unnecessary worry: *“but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your prayers be known unto God.”* There is a place for prayer and supplication, together with thanksgiving, in every instance of life. We're not likely to forget the prayer of petition when troubles come upon us. It's when things are going well for us, that prayers of all kinds are apt to not be rendered. It's at those very times that we should offer sincere prayers of thanksgiving. Praying to God only when we want something is to live an unbalanced life. There should *always* be an ongoing conversation between us and God. We'd do well to remember the sad reflection of Our Lord when only one leper out of ten who were cured returned to give thanks: *“Where are the other nine?”* - (*St. Luke; Ch. 17, Vs. 17*).

A good Christian will find room for thanksgiving in times of trouble, and will even thank God that it is given to him (or her) to suffer something for their Master. St. Peter puts it elsewhere: *“If ye suffer anything for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye.”* (*I Peter; Ch. 3, Vs. 14*). Our Lord also tells us in the Gospel: *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake : rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.”* - (*Matt.; Ch.5, Vs. 10-12*).

We are promised the blessed gift of peace. *“The peace of God which passeth all understanding, (will) keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”* The peace of God! *That* peace which comes from God and from *Him alone*, the peace which the world longs for, but cannot give. This also means peace *with* God, the fruit of a good conscience. It also means peace within *ourselves*, for by God's grace we shall, by careful practice and mortification, bring all of our worldly desires and worldly lusts under control of the mind, which in turn will be subjected to the law of God. Finally, we shall have peace with our fellow-men, so far as this is possible. We can't expect to be left in peace by either the devil or by evil-doers on this earth, but at least we can see to it that we live peaceably with our fellow Christians, and other neighbors; or at any rate, we put no obstacles in the way of peaceable living.

All of this will combine to make excellent preparation, not only for the Second Coming of our Lord, and for the present; for our commemoration of His First Advent at Christmas, when we shall celebrate the birth of the great Prince of Peace.

PRAYER OF THE DAY: The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him - (*Ps. 145*)

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

Lord ! Ev'n as Thou all-present art,
Oh ! May we still with heedful heart
Thy presence know and find !
Then come what will of weal and woe,
Joy's bosom-spring shall steady flow ;
For though 'tis Heaven Thyself to see,
Where but Thy Shadow falls, grief cannot be !

PRO CLERICIS – FOR THE CLERGY

“Do not let your peace depend upon what is outside you ; you will see that our Lord will supply for everything when you are satisfied with him alone, and you will find more in him than all creatures together.”

- Claude de la Colombiere, - (priest, 1641-1682)

The **Meditation** is produced by the Benedictine Community of
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PRIORY KALENDAR

A.D. 2014

Week of December 21st to December 28th : Seasons of Advent / Christmas

Sunday, December 21st . . . Fourth Sunday in Advent. “O Rex Gentium” - *Winter Solstice.*
Monday, December 22nd . . . St. Thomas; Ap. & Myr. - (transferred from Dec. 21st) - - O Emmanuel
Tuesday, December 23rd . . . feria in Advent. ----- O Virgo virginum
Wednesday, December 24th – Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord.
Thursday, December 25th – Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
Friday, December 26th . . . St. Stephen; Dcn. & Myr. - (1st cent. Jerusalem)
Saturday, December 27th . . . St. John: Ap. & Ev. - (1st cent.)
Sunday, December 28th . . . Holy Innocents . . . comm. 1st Sunday After Christmas.

KALENDAR KEY: Ab. = Abbot, Abs. = Abbess, Abp. = Archbishop, Ap = Apostle, Bp. = Bishop, C. or Conf. = Confessor, Comm. = Commemorate. C.S.J. = Jesuit Order, Dcn. = Deacon, Doct. = Doctor of the Church, Ev. = Evangelist, H = Hermit, K = King, M. = Monk, M.M. = Month's Mind (remembrance of the departed), Myr. = Martyr, N. = Nun, P = Priest Po. = Pope, R. = Recluse, Q. = Queen, Vir. = Virgin, W. = Widow , O.Car. = Carmelite Order, O. Cart. = Carthusian Order, O.F.M. = Order of Friars Minor – Franciscans, O.S.B. = Order of St. Benedict – Benedictines, O.C.O. = Order of the Cistercian Observance (Trappists), **FASTING GUIDE:** A = Abstinence, F = Fast, F & A = Fast and Abstinence

KALENDAR NOTES

Benedictine Saints and worthies for the week:

December 22 : Bl. Engelbert; German Cistercian lay-brother. Born blind, but by his great piety was accepted into the Cistercian Order as a laybrother. Exemplary in turning his sufferings into sacrifices. Died in 1190.

December 26 : Luxeul Abbey, France. On this day in 776 most of the monks of the abbey and its Abbot Mellinus were slain by the Saracens in their incursion into France.



Feasts, Fasts and Other Things

The Year of Jesus' Birth

B.C. → A.D. ?

There has always been speculation and some debate among biblical scholars about the actual year in which our Lord was born. Papers have been written and hairs have been split as to when B. C. became A.D. Would there have actually been a year 0?! Hmmm...! Here's what we know. . .

There existed a tradition, affirmed by the third century Christian writer Tertullian, that the Jewish archives from both the temple and civil records had been removed to Rome by the Emperor Titus (79 – 81A.D.) after he sacked Jerusalem in *August of A.D. 80* and within these records contained information on the life and death of Jesus, including the census at the time of his birth. The Romans, very efficient and thorough in the destruction of cities, were just as scrupulous in record keeping, and would have collected whatever civil and religious records that had survived the siege; for the writing of their historic annals and for tax purposes. These documents have never come to light. Could they have been destroyed in the many sackings of Rome in the 5th - 7th centuries ? Possibly. Could some be tucked away in some musty and forgotten place within the massive Vatican archives or in a catacomb that has not yet been discovered ? That too, is possible. That's what makes archeology such a fascinating science!

John of Nikiu (c. 900) wrote that *Pope Julius I (337-352 A.D.)*, in his attempt to convert the Armenians to accepting the date of Christ's birth as December 25th (as reckoned in the Calendar used in the Roman Empire at the time), sent a letter, most likely a forgery, to *St. Cyril (c. 315-386)*, the Bishop of Jerusalem, stating that the date was registered in the archives in Rome.

Dates in the Nativity vary between the Gospels of Saints *Matthew* and *Luke*. St. Matthew stated that Jesus was born “ *in the days of Herod the King* ” (*Matt; Ch. 2 , Vs. 1*). Herod died around 4 B.C. St.

6.

Luke said that it was “*When Cyrenius (Quirinius) was governor of Syria*”. This Quirinius; *Publius Sulpicus Quirinius* by name, is a rather interesting fellow, in that he got two shots at ruling Syria. First, from 3 to 2 B.C. And then from 6 to 7 A.D. He was recalled to Rome by Augustus Caesar for having been caught with his “hands in the till” so to speak, but that is another story altogether.

The anomaly that Jesus was born in B.C. is attributed to a fellow named Dionysius Exiguus, who in 533 A.D. Suggested that *Anno Domini*, “*Year of the Lord*” (A.D.), should replace the Roman system of counting years from the supposed founding of the city of Rome by Romulus and Remus in 754 B.C. Exiguus coordinated 754 A.U.C. (**A.U.C.**= “*ab urbe condita* = “*from the founding of the city*” {of Rome}) with 1 A.D., but old Herod died c. 750 A.U.C. - our present 4 B.C.

“*On the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (27 A.D. - 28 A.D.) -Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age.*” according to St. Luke- (*Luke; Ch. 3, Vs. 1 & 23*). This would place the date of our Lord's birth at around 2 B.C. According to Dionysius' computations. As more source information came to light and methods of calculation became more exact since his time, it is generally agreed today that our Blessed Lord's year of birth was around 6 to 4 B.C.

Funny how we earthlings are fascinated about the “when” . . . what a great thing for us that our Lord was concerned about much greater matters . . . *Deo Gratias!*

Now, about that year 0 . . . was it a leap year ? . . . how would one reconcile their check books? Would they have fretted about a “*Y – 0 K*” if they had had computers then ?! Oh dear, these are questions way too big and silly for a little chip monk to consider ! ! !



Calendar Math . . . If you think too much about it . . . you could drive yourself nuts!

- Br. Chip, O.S.B.



Feasts, Fasts, and Other Things; from **The Chipmunk's Nutshell Library**

Presented by *Br. A. Chip Monk, O.S.B.* A monk of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Priory in Raymond, Maine

Could you or someone that you know, open your heart as the animals opened their hearts and home to the Christ child on that first Christmas? Our funds are low so, if you would like to help and are able, simply mark your check “for the animals**”.**

It will be gratefully received and deeply appreciated.

7.

Snoop and Copper - an update



We were so pleased to have received this picture of our rescue dogs Snoop, (2nd dog in the line) and his brother Copper, (4th dog in line), who were removed from a breeders kennel a few months ago and brought to us starved, abused and with no manners, house breaking etc. They had been outside for 14 months on cement in a kennel. Sr Mary Francis worked on their training and manners and with a little food and lots of love they turned out to be wonderful love bugs and were adopted by a man in Belfast who absolutely adores them. They are now house pets , deeply loved and as you can see they have made some friends. A happy ending to a tragic beginning. These are the kind of things that go on here at the priory and we thank you animal angels who have stepped up to save these animals lives and offer them a 2nd chance at a future whether they stay here or are placed in loving homes. This happens because of you and your generosity and we thank you .The animals all wish you and your a very Blessed, Merry Christmas and blessings for the New Year. Merry Christmas from our permanent residents....horses: Sage and Joseph, ponies: Oliver and Reily, Willow the sheep and Buttercup the goat, Dogs: Luna, Ruth, Pandy, Nicholas, Janey, Chloe, Claire, Alice, Chinchillas: Cheech and Chong and all the turtles.

"Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brothers, ye have done it unto me." - (St. Matthew; Chap. 25 Verse, 40. KJV)

Please make all checks payable to: the Servants of the Holy Family, 4 Shaw Rd. Raymond, Maine.04071 and please indicate "for the animals" so the money will go to them. Thank you!

Please consider including our Animal Outreach and Rescue in your Estate Planning. Contact Sr. Mary Francis, O.S.B. For detail

PAX

