

Scripture and Feast Day Notes

Sunday, December 1, 2024

From Today's Reading

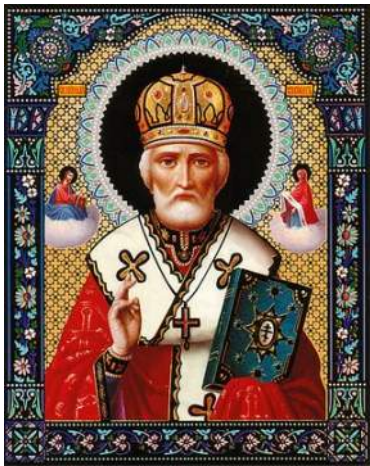
Luke 13:1-9 Jesus refers to two local tragedies: Galilean pilgrims massacred by Pilate and people killed by a collapsing tower. He counters the world view of the time that those whose lives were cut short must have sinned in some way. No indeed! They were no better nor worse than any of us. But the fact that lives may tragically and suddenly end calls all the more for repentance; without skipping a beat, our Lord tells the story of a fig tree which has yet to bear fruit but is spared for one more year. Cultivated and tended it has been given every opportunity to be fruitful. *Discuss/reflect: What kind of "death" do you think Jesus refers to in verse 5? What are the different ways your faith has been nourished? What fruit has this produced in your life? If none or little, what are you waiting for?!*

I Thessalonians 4:1-11 St. Paul commends the Thessalonians for acknowledging God's gift of holiness, as a result they shun sexual immorality, exert honorable self-control, and love others as one might a sister or brother. Paul encourages them to love even more expansively.

Discuss/reflect: Paul taught this community how to live in order to please God (4:1). Whom do you live to please? How would you live differently if it were God you were aiming to please?

Isaiah 36:22-37:11 Assyria has leveled the Northern Kingdom and is now at Jerusalem's door, threatening Hezekiah and mocking his God. Yet King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah remain steadfast in their trust in God. *Discuss/reflect: God is unequivocal in His response to Hezekiah's fear, in summary: Do not be afraid! Listen! I have an answer... (37:6-7) Think of a worry or fear of your own. How might these emphatic words comfort you?*

Saturday, December 11 is the Feast of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker



From a young age, St. Nicholas (c 270-343) was known for his kind-heartedness and unwavering faith. He was imprisoned during the persecution of Christians under Emperor Diocletian and remembered later for his inspiring encouragement to fellow prisoners. As Bishop of Myra, he attended the Council at Nicaea in 325. His moniker "wonderworker" came from the many miracles his prayers and deeds prompted -- saving unjustly condemned prisoners, drowning men at sea, and even his city from a terrible famine. But his name is most associated with Christmas and with the boundless love he had for those in need. One well-known legend of his charity concerned the bags of gold he secretly gifted to three very poor girls whose father was about to turn them out of the house. This led to the practice of giving presents to children at Christmas in his name, which itself evolved from St. Nicholas to Santa Claus. The modern day image of Santa also draws from the story of the pagan god Thor who was associated with winter and the Yule log and rode on a chariot drawn by goats named Cracker and Gnasher. *Reflection: Explore the life of this remarkable saint. Emulate his loving dedication to the poor, the hungry, and the persecuted.*

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