

Scripture and Feast Day Notes

Second Sunday after Theophany

From Today's Readings

John 3:13-21 Jesus continues his instruction to the Pharisee Nicodemus. The Son of Man would be lifted up to heaven that all might share in eternal life. For God so loved the world that He would redeem it with His own Son (v.17). Light has come into the world (in Jesus) but those who fear exposure, prefer the darkness. Hmmm... *Discuss/reflect: If God were to shine a bright light on your life would you be happy or ashamed? What can you do to "clean up your act" so that the light of the Lord is welcome, freeing you to become who God always meant you to be?*

1 Timothy 4:12-5:10 Paul encourages his beloved protégé Timothy, now leading the community in Ephesus, to be confident in his gifts, even though he is a young man. He should be a good example in all he does and says and take great care of all in need (particularly widows, as these women were extremely vulnerable in a time when men were the legal and societal protectors of their families). *Discuss/reflect: We've all heard the expression "he talks the talk but doesn't walk the walk." Why is personal example so important in Christian leadership (v.12)?*

Isaiah 58:13-59:7 Addressing a community reshaping itself after a long and painful exile, these verses express God's desire for righteous living, for His people to honor God's holy day with joy and hearts of faith and commit to holiness and social justice. Pious practices are meaningless if offered up by a sinful and unjust society. *Discuss/reflect: For most of us, Sundays remain the only day God is -- if even nominally -- front and center. What does Sunday mean to you? In what ways do you carry its message through the rest of the week?*

Tuesday, January 25: St. Vahan of Goghtn



The story of St. Vahan of Goghtn is one of the most poignant among Armenian saints. He was born in the eighth century of a princely family in the Goghtn region of the province of Siunik. After persecution of the Armenians by the Arabs in 707 (during which Vahan's father, Prince Khosrov, was martyred), four-year-old Vahan was taken to Damascus where he was raised in the royal court as a Muslim. He was eventually appointed chancellor to the Emir. Some years later, he was allowed to go back to Armenia with the promise to eventually return. Vahan converted to Christianity, married an Armenian princess, and lived a peaceful life for about a decade. A change of Arab rule forced Vahan to leave his home and family to escape recapture. While in exile, he became a monk. In 736, Vahan went to the new Arab Emir in uttermost misery. The Emir offered him a high position, authority, and wealth, but Vahan refused, preferring his faith in Christ to personal comfort and glory. He was martyred on March 18, 737 A.D. His last words were a bold declaration: "I chose death for the sake of Christ rather than earthly life." *Reflection: As you consider St. Vahan's life, what especially strikes you? What qualities emerge that are admirable, perhaps even extraordinary? What one word would you choose as an epithet for this saintly man?*

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