

December 14, 2020

Good Monday Morning!

We would like to thank everyone who attended the concert, especially the wonderful musicians and our Music Director last night - Chris Cole. Great swan song Chris!

1. Today's Readings: bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/121420.cfm

2. ***The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus***: Memorial of Saint John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church

"They who are bent on sensible sweetness, labor also under another very great imperfection: excessive weakness and remissness on the rugged road of the cross; for the soul that is given to sweetness naturally sets its face against all the pain of self-denial. They labor under many other imperfections, which have their origin here, of which our Lord will heal them in due time, through temptations, aridities and trials, elements of the dark night." — *St. John of the Cross*

St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila worked to reform the Carmelite order out of the laxity that had become common back to the original strict observance.

If you've ever heard of "the dark night of the soul", this term was made famous by today's saint. Although ordinary sufferings (eg. illness, depression, failures, etc.) can purify us when we accept them with love, they are fundamentally different and distinct from the "dark nights". St. John is known as a mystic and patron saint of mystics. St. John of the Cross, pray for us!

3. Advent Calendar Quote of the Day: Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight his path. Isaiah 40:3

4. Quotes from St. John of the Cross

- a. Whenever anything disagreeable or displeasing happens to you, remember Christ crucified and be silent.
- b. If you purify your soul of attachment to and desire for things, you will understand them spiritually. If you deny your appetite for them, you will enjoy their truth, understanding what is certain in them.
- c. It is great wisdom to know how to be silent and to look at neither the remarks, nor the deeds, nor the lives of others.
- d. Wait upon God with loving and pure attentiveness, working no violence on yourself lest you disturb the soul's peace and tranquility. God will feed your soul with heavenly food since you put no obstacle in His way. The soul in this state must remember that if it is not conscious of making progress, it is making much more than when it was walking on foot, because God Himself is bearing it in His arms. Although outwardly it is doing

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nothing, it is in reality doing more than if it were working, since God is doing the work within it. And it is not remarkable that the soul does not see this, for our senses cannot perceive what God does in the soul. . . if the soul stays in God's care it will certainly make progress.

e. God desires the smallest degree of purity of conscience in you more than all the works you can perform.



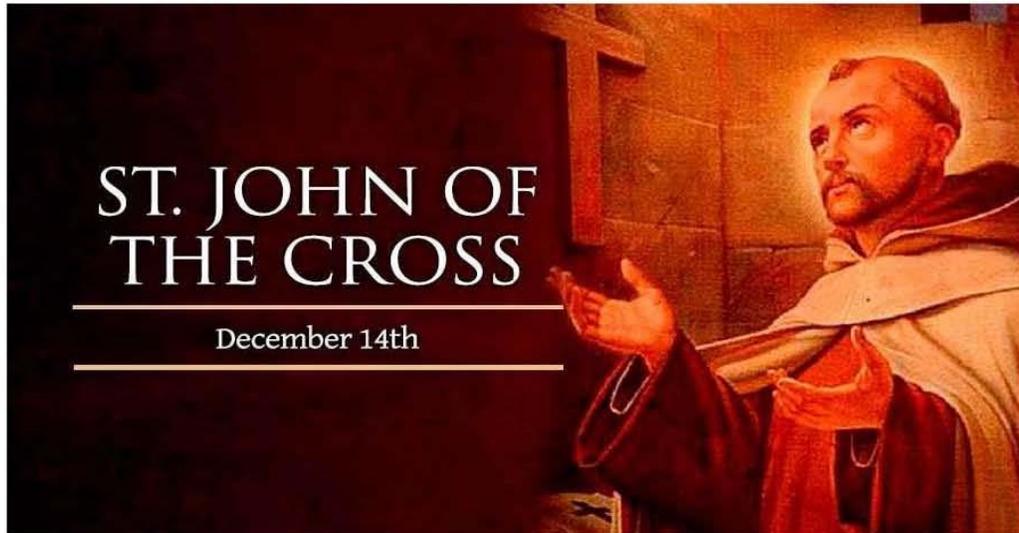
Rainy Monday - may be better in the afternoon. Grab your umbrella!

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Linda McCormick
St. Joseph Catholic Church & School
1200 Cornelia Road
Anderson, SC 29621

Phone: (864) 225-5341, ext. 102

Fax: (864) 225-6432



December 14th is the liturgical memorial of Saint John of the Cross, a 16th century Carmelite priest best known for reforming his order together with Saint Teresa of Avila, and for writing the classic spiritual treatise “The Dark Night of the Soul.”

Honored as a Doctor of the Church since 1926, he is sometimes called the “Mystical Doctor,” as a tribute to the depth of his teaching on the soul's union with God.

The youngest child of parents in the silk-weaving trade, John de Yepes was born during 1542 in Fontiveros near the Spanish city of Avila. His father Gonzalo died at a relatively young age, and his mother Catalina struggled to provide for the family. John found academic success from his early years but failed in his effort to learn a trade as an apprentice. Instead, he spent several years working in a hospital for the poor, and continuing his studies at a Jesuit college in the town of Medina del Campo.

After discerning a calling to monastic life, John entered the Carmelite Order in 1563. He had been practicing severe physical asceticism even before joining the Carmelites and got permission to live according to their original rule of life – which stressed solitude, silence, poverty, work, and contemplative prayer. John received ordination as a priest in 1567 after studying in Salamanca but considered transferring to the more austere Carthusian order rather than remaining with the Carmelites.

Before he could take such a step, however, he met the Carmelite nun later canonized as Saint Teresa of Avila. Born in 1515, Teresa had joined the order in 1535, regarding consecrated religious life as the most secure road to salvation. Since that time, she had made remarkable spiritual progress, and during the 1560s she began a movement to return the Carmelites to the strict observance of their original way of life. She convinced John not to leave the order, but to work for its reform.

Changing his religious name from "John of St. Matthias" to "John of the Cross," the priest began this work in November of 1568, accompanied by two other men of the order with whom he shared a small and austere house. For a time, John was in charge of the new recruits to the "Discalced Carmelites" – the name adopted by the reformed group, since they wore sandals rather than ordinary shoes as sign of poverty. He also spent five years as the confessor at a monastery in Avila led by St. Teresa.

Their reforming movement grew quickly, but also met with severe opposition that jeopardized its future during the 1570s. Early in December of 1577, during a dispute over John's assignment within the order, opponents of the strict observance seized and imprisoned him in a tiny cell. His ordeal lasted nine months and included regular public floggings along with other harsh punishments. Yet it was during this very period that he composed the poetry that would serve as the basis for his spiritual writings.

John managed to escape from prison in August of 1578, after which he resumed the work of founding and directing Discalced Carmelite communities. Over the course of a decade he set out his spiritual teachings in works such as "The Ascent of Mount Carmel," "The Spiritual Canticle" and "The Living Flame of Love" as well as "The Dark Night of the Soul." But intrigue within the order eventually cost him his leadership position, and his last years were marked by illness along with further mistreatment.

St. John of the Cross died in the early hours of Dec. 14, 1591, nine years after St. Teresa of Avila's death in October 1582. Suspicion, mistreatment, and humiliation had characterized much of his time in religious life, but these trials are understood as having brought him closer to God by breaking his dependence on the things of

this world. Accordingly, his writings stress the need to love God above all things – being held back by nothing, and likewise holding nothing back.

Only near the end of his life had St. John's monastic superior recognized his wisdom and holiness. Though his reputation had suffered unjustly for years, this situation reversed soon after his death. He was beatified in 1675, canonized in 1726, and named a Doctor of the Church in the 20th century by Pope Pius XI. In a letter marking the 400th anniversary of St. John's death, Pope John Paul II – who had written a doctoral thesis on the saint's writings – recommended the study of the Spanish mystic, whom he called a “master in the faith and witness to the living God.”

Source: catholicnewsagency.com