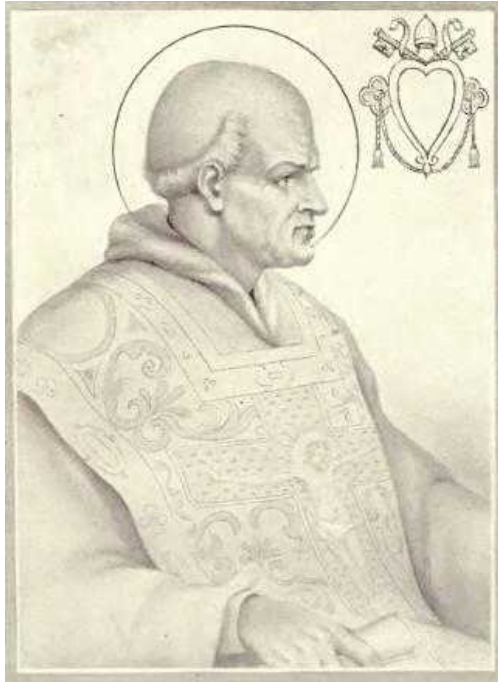


SIXTH MONDAY IN EASTERTIDE
MAY 18TH 2020



POPE SAINT JOHN 1

He was born in Tuscany and elected pope in 523. It was a time of high political and religious tension. Theodoric the Ostrogoth, the ruler of Italy, was an Arian, while many of his subjects were Catholics.

Initially tolerant, he became increasingly suspicious of Catholic influence and political allegiance – above all, because they naturally had strong links with the surviving eastern Roman Empire in Constantinople. Justin, the Catholic emperor, was persecuting Arians in the eastern Roman Empire and they appealed to Theodoric for help.

Pope John I was sent on an embassy to the emperor, to ask for better treatment for the Arians. In this he succeeded; but the enthusiasm with which he was greeted in Constantinople excited Theodoric's suspicions, and when he returned to Italy Theodoric had him imprisoned and he died from ill treatment there a few days later.

Pope John I's career reminds us what tolerance is and is not. Arianism was a dangerous heresy (by making the Son subordinate to the Father it made the Atonement virtually pointless) and there could be no compromise with it – but this did not mean that Arians themselves were to be persecuted for their beliefs. Then, as so often now, it was the state and not the Church that tried to use force to impose uniformity.

Reflection: When we look at the readings today we soon realise that we have recently meditated on them. In a way they are put in the wrong order. In the Gospel of John we look back to those around Jesus in the hours before the Passion. There is tension in the air. Everyone is expecting something to happen but unsure how things would turn out. Only Jesus could see through the imminent events. In this piece, the apostles are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to give them strength & courage.

In the First reading, we learn of the power of that same spirit working through the ministry of Saints Paul & Barnabus. They didn't always get on, but they were fired up with God's love so much so that they risked everything for the Gospel. The message was often well received & the early Christian community made a rapid expansion around the Mediterranean Sea.

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles 15: 36 - 16: 15

Today's Reading at Mass is in *Bold Italics*

On a later occasion **Paul** said to **Barnabas**, 'Let us go back and visit all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord, so that we can see how the brothers are doing'.

Barnabas suggested taking John Mark, but Paul was not in favour of taking along the very man who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had refused to share in their work. After a violent quarrel they parted company, and Barnabas sailed off with Mark to Cyprus. Before Paul left, he chose Silas to accompany him and was commended by the brothers to the grace of God.

He travelled through Syria and Cilicia, consolidating the churches. From there he went to Derbe, and then on to Lystra. Here there was a disciple called Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess who had become a believer; but his father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of Timothy, and Paul, who wanted to have him as a travelling companion, had him circumcised. This was on account of the Jews in the locality where everyone knew his father was a Greek.

As they visited one town after another, they passed on the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, with instructions to respect them. So the churches grew strong in the faith, as well as growing daily in numbers.

They travelled through Phrygia and the Galatian country, having been told by the Holy Spirit not to preach the word in Asia. When they reached the frontier of Mysia they thought to cross it into Bithynia, but as the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them, they went through Mysia and came down to Troas.

One night Paul had a vision: a Macedonian appeared and appealed to him in these words, 'Come across to Macedonia and help us.' Once he had seen this vision we lost no time in arranging a passage to Macedonia, convinced that God had called us to bring them the Good News.

Sailing from Troas we made a straight run for Samothrace; the next day for Neapolis, and from there for Philippi, a Roman colony and the principal city of that particular district of Macedonia. After a few days in this city we went along the river outside the gates as it was the sabbath and this was a customary place for prayer. We sat down and preached to the women who had come to the meeting. One of these women was called Lydia, a devout woman from the town of Thyatira who was in the purple-dye trade. She listened to us, and the Lord opened her heart to accept what Paul was saying.

After she and her household had been baptised she sent us an invitation: 'If you really think me a true believer in the Lord,' she said 'come and stay with us'; and she would take no refusal.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

PSALM 149

Sing a new song to the Lord,
his praise in the assembly of the faithful.
Let Israel rejoice in its Maker,
let Zion's sons exult in their king.

Let them praise his name with dancing
and make music with timbrel and harp.
For the Lord takes delight in his people.
He crowns the poor with salvation.

Let the faithful rejoice in their glory,
shout for joy and take their rest.
Let the praise of God be on their lips:
this honour is for all his faithful.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel According to John 15: 26 – 16: 4

Jesus said to his disciples: 'When the Advocate comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness.

And you too will be witnesses, because you have been with me from the outset.

'I have told you all this that your faith may not be shaken.

They will expel you from the synagogues, and indeed the hour is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a holy duty for God.

They will do these things because they have never known either the Father or myself.

But I have told you all this, so that when the time for it comes you may remember that I told you.'

THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD