

Love your
neighbor as
yourself

-Jesus



I want to
accustom
all the
inhabitants
...to look on me
as their brother

-Br. Charles de
Foucauld

February, 2007

To my brothers and sisters in Christ,

I pray this letter finds you filled with peace! As we continue our pilgrimage on this earth, may we always be ready to ask God's grace to seek him in every event, every day.

I continue to do what I can to be a light for my neighbors, coworkers, and all I come across each day. Always aware that I carry the treasure of God in an earthen vessel, I must pray that prayer of St. Antony: "Lord, today I begin again."

Lately, I have been helping at the diocesan refugee and immigration office. It is a great joy to assist with the ESL class. We all need to be especially kind to foreigners and immigrants. Many of them have endured harrowing trials and it is only right that the wealthiest nation on earth should open its coffers and heart.

In other news, I will be taking my parents for a pilgrimage to Rome in March! It will be their first trip to Europe, and my first visit to Rome in almost four years. Please pray that we have a good trip, and we will be sure to pray for you and for your intentions. I am especially happy to have secured a visit to the Scavi, the ancient Roman necropolis under St. Peter's where you can visit Peter's tomb. Only a few hundred people each day can visit the necropolis, so I am thankful a place was still open.

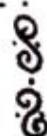
There has been much turmoil in the world in recent months, especially in Iraq, and everyone is concerned about where we are headed. I hope that the enclosed meditation will help you to renew your trust in God and recommit yourself this coming Lenten season.

As always, please pray for my conversion and know that each and every one of you are very dear to me. Have a great 2007!

In peace and love,

Matthew

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Prayers are needed and appreciated!
(no postal fee required)



meditation

february 2007

Do you believe that God is all powerful? When you pray that the strength of God might intervene in a difficult situation, do you truly believe in his might?

Any more, it seems that many people are seeking to dilute the strength of God. Of course, they might never commit the fallacy of saying that That Which No Greater Can Be Imagined is not truly omnipotent. Yet, open many commentaries on Scripture and you will see attempts to rationalize miracles, proclaim that the crossing of the Red Sea was a natural phenomenon, etc. Even if you believe in the strength of God, is your belief merely lip service?

Let us follow Abraham this Lenten season and go into the wilderness. In Genesis 15, Abraham has offered a sacrifice to God and is looking for a sign that will prove that his seed will possess the land. As he sits waiting, "a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a great and darksome horror seized upon him." Then came the voice of God with the sign. The "great and darksome horror" that Abraham felt was a reflection of the infinite power of God making himself known to a creature. It certainly does not negate the love of God, but reveals his overwhelming presence.

Throughout the books of the Bible, the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture to use words of power. God "crushes" the Egyptian pursuers as the Children of Abraham cross the Red Sea. In the canticle they sing after the crossing, they proclaim his right hand is "magnified in strength (15:6)". In ancient art from this period, a ruler is shown with his arm raised over the heads of his captured foes, preparing to strike them with a weapon. Certainly, such an image applied to God would not be far-fetched to the Israelites, who saw firsthand that he is Lord and Master over all his creation.

We, too, should try to cultivate an understanding of this "fear of the Lord"--not a servile fear, but a deep sense of respect and submission. If we read about God's power and wrath in the Bible, let us not see him with terror nor try to explain away what we find unpleasant. Instead, may we follow the middle ground of true reverence and awe, knowing that God is All, and we are not.

Finally, may we always pray with conviction and trust that God is sovereign. As we spend our forty days in the wilderness, let us ask Abraham to be with us and teach us how to fear and love God.