June 9, 2021

Good Morning All,

Adoration following the morning Mass until 5PM.

"We must understand that in order 'to do', we must first learn 'to be', that is to say, in the sweet company of Jesus in adoration." Pope St. John Paul II

Please pray for the soul of Sr. Mary Frances who died early this morning.

1. Today's Readings: https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/060921.cfm

2. The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus: Today we celebrate St. Ephrem, deacon and Doctor of the Church. Our article today shares some of his many poems and hymns that he left us.

3. Quotes of the Day: St. Ephraim the Syrian earned his recognition as a Doctor of the Church as he has written many insightful thoughts down to help all us grow in faith. See just a few below - they are just a sampling of many.

"Inside I am not what I appear to be: Heal me."

"Do nothing at all unless you begin with prayer."

"Virtues are formed by prayer. Prayer preserves temperance. Prayer suppresses anger. Prayer prevents emotions of pride and envy. Prayer draws into the soul the Holy Spirit, and raises man to Heaven."

"Blessed in he who always retains in himself remembrance of God, for such a person on earth is like a heavenly angel, constantly celebrating the Lord with fear and love."

St. Ephrem, Pray for Us!
St. Joseph, Pray for Us!

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St. Ephrem

"I was born in the way of truth: though my childhood was unaware of the greatness of the benefit, I knew it when trial came."

Ephrem (or Eprhaim) the Syrian left us hundreds of hymns and poems on the faith that inflamed and inspired the whole Church, but few facts about his own inspiring life.

Most historians infer from the lines quoted above that Ephrem was born into a Christian family -- although not baptized until an adult (the trial or furnace), which was common at the time. Other than that little is known about his birth and youth although many guess he was born in the early fourth century in Mesopotamia, possibly in Nisibis where he spent most of his adult life.

"He Who created two great lights, chose for Himself these three Lights, and set them in the three dark seasons of siege that have been."

Ephrem served as teacher, and possibly deacon, under four bishops of Nisibis, Jacob, Babu, Vologeses, and Abraham. The first three he describes in the hymn quoted above written while Vologeses was still alive. As the verse states, Ephrem did not live in easy times in Nisibis.

> *"I have chanced upon weeds, my brothers, That wear the color of wheat, To choke the good seed."*

According to tradition, Ephrem began to write hymns in order to counteract the heresies that were rampant at that time. For those who think of hymns simply as the song at the end of Mass that keeps us from leaving the church early, it may

In the end, however, Nisibis lost. When Shapur defeated the Roman emperor Jovian, he demanded the city as part of the treaty. Jovian not only gave him the city but agreed to force the Christians to leave Nisibis. Probably in his fifties or sixties at that time, Ephrem was one of the refugees who fled the city in 363.

Sometime in 364 he settled as a solitary ascetic on Mount Edessa, at Edessa (what is now Urfa) 100 miles east of his home.

> "*The soul is your bride, the body is your bridal chamber...*"

In the time before monks and monasteries, many devout Christians drawn to a religious life dedicated themselves as ihidaya (single and single-minded followers of Christ). As one of these Ephrem lived an ascetic, celibate life for his last years.

Heresy and danger followed him to Edessa. The Arian Emperor Valens camped outside of Edessa threatening to kill all the Christian inhabitants if they did not submit. But Valens was the one forced to give up in the face of the courage and steadfastness of the Edessans (fortified by Ephrem's hymns):

> *"The doors of her homes Edessa Left open when she went forth With the pastor to the grave, to die, And not depart from her faith. Let the city and fort and building and houses be yielded to the king; Our goods and our gold let us leave; So, we part not from our faith!"*

Tradition tells us that during the famine that hit Edessa in 372, Ephrem was horrified to learn that some citizens were hoarding food. When he confronted them, he received the age-old excuse that they couldn't find a fair way or honest person to distribute the food. Ephrem immediately volunteered himself and it is a sign of how respected he was that no one was able to argue with this choice. He and his helpers worked diligently to get food to the needy in the city and the surrounding area.

The famine ended in a year of abundant harvest the following year and Ephrem died shortly thereafter, as we are told, at an advanced age. We do not know the

come as a surprise that Ephrem and others recognized and developed the power of music to get their points across. Tradition tells us that Ephrem heard the heretical ideas put into song first and in order to counteract them made up his own hymns. In the one below, his target is a Syrian heretic Bardesan who denied the truth of the Resurrection:

> *"How he blasphemes justice, and grace her fellow-worker. For if the body was not raised, This is a great insult against grace, To say grace created the body for decay; And this is slander against justice, to say justice sends the body to destruction."*

The originality, imagery, and skill of his hymns captured the hearts of the Christians so well, that Ephrem is given credit for awakening the Church to the important of music and poetry in spreading and fortifying the faith.

Ephrem's home was in physical as well as spiritual danger. Nisibis, a target of Shapur II, the King of Persia, was besieged by him three times. During the third siege in in 350, Shapur's engineers turned the river out of its course in order to flood the city as Ephrem describes (speaking as Nisibis):

> *"All kinds of storms trouble me -- and you have been kinder to the Ark: only waves surrounded it, but ramps and weapons and waves surround me... O Helmsman of the Ark, be my pilot on dry land! You gave the Ark rest on the haven of a mountain, give me rest in the haven of my walls."*

The flood, however, turned the tide against Shapur. When he tried to invade, he found his army obstructed by the very waters and ruin he had caused. The defenders of the city, including Ephrem, took advantage of the chaos to ambush the invaders and drive them out.

> *"He has saved us without wall and taught us that He is our wall: He has saved us without king and made us know that is our king: He has saved us, in each and all, and showed us that He is All."*

exact date or year of his death but June 9, 373 is accepted by many. Ephrem relates in his dying testament a childhood vision of his life that he gloriously fulfilled:

> *"There grew a vine-shoot on my tongue: and increased and reached unto heaven, and it yielded fruit without measure: leaves likewise without number. It spread, it stretched wide, it bore fruit: all creation drew near, And the more they were that gathered: the more its clusters abounded. These clusters were the Homilies; and these leaves the Hymns. God was the giver of them: glory to Him for His grace! For He gave to me of His good pleasure: from the storehouse of His treasures."*

Source: catholic.org