**Scripture and Feast Day Notes**

**Sunday, December 8. 2019**

**From Today’s Readings**

**Luke 14:12-24** The parable of the Great Banquet is Jesus’ response to the complacent faith of the lawyers and Pharisees. We learn that it is sadly foolish to be too busy for God. An egocentric faith puts us in danger of losing our place at His table. *Discuss/reflect: What excuses did those invited give for declining to attend? (vv 18-20: one had to attend to his field; a second to his new oxen and a third was to be married) What are the reasons you don’t make time for God?*

**1 Thessalonians 1:1-12** Paul’s greeting to the Thessalonians expresses deep gratitude for their faith. Not only did they turn from pagan idols and serve “the living and true God,” but their exemplary faith – even in suffering – became an inspiring model for other believers. *Discuss/reflect: What qualities does St. Paul mention (v 3) as having characterized the Thessalonians? (Faith, love, and hope – the three Christian “anchors.”) Where do you find these qualities in your life?*

**Isaiah 37:14-38** After Hezekiah’s prayer for deliverance from the Assyrians, Isaiah conveys God’s comforting response: that the planned attack on Jerusalem will fail. *Discuss/reflect: Hezekiah declares that other countries were laid waste along with their useless idols of wood and stone (vv18-19). Consider your own “idols” – those things you value highly. Do they interfere with your relationship with God? How, specifically?*

**December 14 is the Feast of St. James of Nisibis**

St. James, a cousin of St. Gregory, was appointed bishop of Nisibis, Mesopotamia, in 308 A.D. Nisibis is the modern city of Nusaybin (in southwest Turkey on the border with Syria). He founded a theological school there, attended the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., and was renowned for his pious and virtuous life.

According to tradition, while St. James preached in and around Nisibis, he heard that people doubted the story of Noah's Ark. He was determined to provide his flock with evidence, so he set out for the peak of Mount Ararat to find the remains of the ark. During his arduous journey, an angel appeared to him in a vision and brought him a piece of the wood from Noah's Ark. St. James prayed to God to produce a miracle at the place where he had the vision and immediately afterward a spring gushed forth, which exists to this day. The relic of Noah's Ark received by St. James is in Holy Etchmiadzin. *Department of Christian Education*

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