

Lectio Divina

SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

“What page, what passage of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is not the truest of guides for human life?” ~Saint Benedict, from the *Rule of Saint Benedict* (73:3)

“The statue of Mary, the Mother who protects and accompanies us, reminds us that she herself was called ‘blessed.’ Let us ask her for the gift of openness to the Holy Spirit. Our Lady experienced a sorrow that pierced her heart like a sword, and crossed the most painful threshold of grief as she beheld the death of her Son. May she obtain for us that persevering joy that never falters or fades. The joy that constantly leads us to experience and proclaim: ‘The Most High has done great things, and holy is his name’.” ~POPE FRANCIS, HOMILY EXCERPT, SEPTEMBER 9, 2019

Monday, October 14 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Callistus I, Pope and Martyr

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:29-32 While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them, “This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here.”

Meditation: The Lord Jesus came to set us free from slavery to sin and hurtful desires. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit he pours his love into our hearts that we may understand his will for our lives and walk in his way of holiness. God searches our hearts, not to condemn us, but to show us where we need his saving grace and help. He calls us to seek him with true repentance, humility, and the honesty to see our sins for what they really are — a rejection of his love and will for our lives. God will transform us if we listen to his word and allow his Holy Spirit to work in our lives. James says that the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity (James 3:17). A double-minded person cannot receive this kind of wisdom. The single of heart desire one thing alone — God's pleasure. God wants us to delight in him and to know the freedom of his truth and love.

Prayer: O God, who raised up Pope Saint Callistus the First to serve the Church and attend devoutly to Christ's faithful departed, strengthen us, we pray, by his witness to the faith, so that, rescued from the slavery of corruption, we may merit an incorruptible inheritance. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Do you pay attention to warning signs? When the religious leaders demanded a sign from Jesus, he gave them a warning to avert spiritual disaster. It was characteristic of the Jews that they demanded "signs" from God's messengers to authenticate their claims. When the religious leaders pressed Jesus to give proof for his claims he says in so many words that he is God's sign and that they need no further evidence from heaven than his own person. The Ninevites recognized God's warning when Jonah spoke to them, and they repented. Jonah was God's sign and his message was the message of God for the people of Nineveh. Unfortunately the religious leaders were not content to accept the signs right before their eyes. They had rejected the message of John the Baptist and now they reject Jesus as God's Anointed One (Messiah) and they fail to heed his message.

Tuesday, October 15 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Theresa of Jesus, Virgin and Doctor of the Church

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:37-41 After Jesus had spoken, a Pharisee invited him to dine at his home. He entered and reclined at table to eat. The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not observe the

prescribed washing before the meal. The Lord said to him, "Oh you Pharisees! Although you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, inside you are filled with plunder and evil. You fools! Did not the maker of the outside also make the inside? But as to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you."

Meditation: Is the Lord welcomed at your table and are you ready to feast at his table? A Pharisee, after hearing Jesus preach, invited him to dinner, no doubt, because he wanted to hear more from this extraordinary man who spoke the word of God as no one else had done before. It was not unusual for a rabbi to give a teaching over dinner. Jesus, however, did something which offended his host. He did not perform the ceremonial washing of hands before beginning the meal. Did Jesus forget or was he deliberately performing a sign to reveal something to his host? Jesus turned the table on his host by chiding him for uncleanness of heart.

Prayer: O God, who through your Spirit raised up Saint Teresa of Jesus to show the Church the way to seek perfection, grant that we may always be nourished by the food of her heavenly teaching and fired with longing for true holiness. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Which is more important to God — clean hands, or a clean mind and a clean heart? Jesus chided the Pharisees for harboring evil thoughts that make us unclean spiritually — such as greed, pride, bitterness, envy, arrogance, and the like. Why does he urge them, and us, to give alms? When we give freely and generously to those in need we express love, compassion, kindness, and mercy. And if the heart is full of love and compassion, then there is no room for envy, greed, bitterness, and the like. Do you allow God's love to transform your heart and mind? If not, why not?

Wednesday, October 16 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time **Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, Virgin;** **Saint Gerard Majella, Priest**

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:42-46 The Lord said: "Woe to you Pharisees! You pay tithes of mint and of rue and of every garden herb, but you pay no attention to judgment and to love for God. These you should have done, without overlooking the others. Woe to you Pharisees! You love the seat of honor in synagogues and greetings in marketplaces. Woe to you! You are like unseen graves over which people unknowingly walk." Then one of the scholars of the law said to him in reply, "Teacher, by saying this you are insulting us too." And he said, "Woe also to you scholars of the law! You impose on people burdens hard to carry, but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them."

Meditation: The word "woe" can also be translated as alas. It is as much an expression of sorrowful pity as it is of anger. Why did Jesus lament and issue such a stern rebuke? Jesus was angry with the religious leaders because they failed to listen to God's word and they misled the people they were supposed to guide in the ways of God. The scribes devoted their lives to the study of the Law of God and regarded themselves as legal experts in it. They divided the Ten Commandments and precepts into thousands of tiny rules and regulations. They were so exacting in their interpretations and in trying to live them out, that they had little time for anything else. By the time they finished compiling their interpretations it took no less than fifty volumes to contain them! In their misguided zeal, they required unnecessary and burdensome rules which obscured the more important matters of religion, such as love of God and love of neighbor. They were leading people to "Pharisaism" rather than to God.

Prayer: Pour out on us, we pray, O Lord, the spirit with which you so remarkably endowed Saint Margaret Mary, so that we may come to know that love of Christ which surpasses all understanding and be utterly filled with your fullness. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer to Saint Gerard Majella for an Expectant Mother: Great Saint Gerard, beloved servant of Jesus Christ, perfect imitator of Jesus, and devoted child of the Mother of God, enkindle within my heart one spark of that Heavenly fire of charity which glowed in yours. Because you bore, without murmur or complaint, the calumnies of wicked men when falsely accused of crime, you have been raised up by God as the patron and protector of expectant mothers. Preserve me/her in the dangers of motherhood, and shield the child I/she now bear(s), that it may be brought safely to the light of day, and receive the sacrament of baptism. Amen.

Contemplation: What was the point of Jesus' lesson in today's Gospel? Simple! The essence of God's commandments is love — love of the supreme good — God himself and love of our neighbor who is made in the image and likeness of God. God is love and everything he does flows from his love for us. God's

love is unconditional and is wholly directed towards the good of others. True love both embraces and lifts the burdens of others. Paul the Apostle reminds us that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given us" (1 Cor. 5:5). Do you help your neighbors carry their burdens? God gives each of us sufficient grace for each day to love as he loves and to lift the burdens of others that they, too, may experience the grace and love of Jesus Christ.

Thursday, October 17 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and Martyr

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:47-54 The Lord said: "Woe to you who build the memorials of the prophets whom your fathers killed. Consequently, you bear witness and give consent to the deeds of your ancestors, for they killed them and you do the building. Therefore, the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and Apostles; some of them they will kill and persecute' in order that this generation might be charged with the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who died between the altar and the temple building. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be charged with their blood! Woe to you, scholars of the law! You have taken away the key of knowledge. You yourselves did not enter and you stopped those trying to enter." When Jesus left, the scribes and Pharisees began to act with hostility toward him and to interrogate him about many things, for they were plotting to catch him at something he might say.

Meditation: What does Jesus mean when he says they have taken away the key of knowledge? The religious lawyers and scribes held the "office of the keys" since they were the official interpreters of the scriptures. Unfortunately their interpretation of the scriptures became so distorted and difficult to understand that others were "shut off" to the scriptures. They not only shut themselves to heaven; they also hindered others from understanding God's word. Through pride and envy, they rejected not only the prophets of old, but God's final prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the "key of David" (see Isaiah 22:22; Revelations 3:7) who opens heaven to those who accept him as Lord and Savior. He is the "Wisdom of God" and source of everlasting life. Only the humble of heart – those who thirst for God and acknowledge his word as true – can truly understand this wisdom.

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, who adorn the sacred body of your Church with the confessions of holy Martyrs, grant, we pray, that, just as the glorious passion of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, which we celebrate today, brought him eternal splendor, so it may be for us unending protection. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Do you revere God's word and submit to it as true and authoritative for your life? Or does God's word make for a good phrase on a t-shirt or coffee mug, and that's about as far as it goes? God sent his prophets to open the ears of his people to hear and understand God's word and intention for their lives. God's wisdom is personified in the voice of the prophets, a voice that usually brought rejection and martyrdom because they spoke for God rather than for human approval and favor. Jesus chastised many of the religious leaders of his day for being double-minded and for demanding from others standards which they refused to satisfy. They professed admiration for the prophets by building their tombs while at the same time they opposed their message and closed their ears to the word of God.

Friday, October 18 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Luke, Evangelist

Holy Gospel: Luke 10:1-9 The Lord Jesus appointed seventy-two disciples whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.'"

Meditation: There is a significance of Jesus appointing 72 disciples to the ministry of the word, one of whom was Saint Luke, the Evangelist, who himself was a convert from paganism. Seventy-two was a significant number in biblical times. Moses, for example, chose 72 elders to help him in the task of leading the people through the wilderness. In Jesus' times, 72 was held to be the number of nations throughout

the world. Jesus commissioned the 72 disciples to a two-fold task: to speak in his name, and to act with his power. Jesus gave them instructions in how they were to carry out their ministry. They must go and serve as men without guile, full of charity and peace, and simplicity. They must give their full attention to the proclamation of God's kingdom and not be diverted by other lesser things. They must travel light — only take what was essential and leave behind whatever would distract them — in order to concentrate on the task of speaking the word of God. They must do their work, not for what they can get out of it, but for what they can give freely to others, without expecting special privileges or reward.

Prayer: Lord God, who chose Saint Luke to reveal by his preaching and writings the mystery of your love for the poor, grant that those who already glory in your name may persevere as one heart and one soul and that all nations may merit to see your salvation. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: When Jesus commissioned 72 of his disciples to go on mission, he gave them a vision of a great harvest for the kingdom of God. Jesus frequently used the image of a harvest to convey the coming of God's reign on earth. The harvest is the fruition of labor and growth — beginning with the sowing of seeds, then growth, and finally fruit for the harvest. In like manner, the word of God is sown in the hearts of receptive men and women who submit to God and honor him as their Lord and King. The harvest Jesus had in mind was not only for the people of Israel, but for all the peoples (or nations) of the world. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). It also bears contemplation of the meaning when Jesus says his disciples must be lambs in the midst of wolves.

Saturday, October 19 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time Saints Isaac Jogues and John de Brebeuf, Priests and Martyrs, and Companions, Martyrs

Holy Gospel: Luke 12:8-12 Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God. But whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God. "Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. When they take you before synagogues and before rulers and authorities, do not worry about how or what your defense will be or about what you are to say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say."

Meditation: Jesus warns that it is possible to reject the grace of God and to fall into "apostasy" (giving up the faith) out of cowardice or disbelief. The scriptural expression to deny someone means to disown them. Jesus also speaks against "blaspheming" the Holy Spirit. What is blasphemy and why is it reprehensible? Basically, blasphemy consists in some form of utterance against God, inwardly or outwardly, words of hatred, reproach, or defiance. Why? Because it is contrary to the respect due God and his holy name. Jesus speaks of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit as the unforgivable sin. Jesus spoke about this sin immediately after the scribes and Pharisees had attributed his miracles to the work of the devil instead of to God.

Prayer: O God, who chose to manifest the blessed hope of your eternal Kingdom by the toil of Saints John de Brebeuf, Isaac Jogues and their companions and by the shedding of their blood, graciously grant that through their intercession the faith of Christians may be strengthened day by day. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Folks, a sin can only be unforgivable if we do not repent of our sins, or do not have a contrite heart for sins committed. If someone repeatedly closes his or her heart to God and shuts one's ears to God's voice, the person may come to a point where he or she can no longer recognize God even when God makes himself known. Such a person can end up perceiving evil as good and good as evil (Isaiah 5:20). To fear such a sin, however, signals that one is not dead to God and is conscious of the need for God's grace and mercy. Always remember: there are no limits to the mercy and love of God. But anyone who refuses to accept God's mercy by repenting of wrongdoing, rejects the forgiveness of their sins and the salvation offered. God gives grace and help to all who humbly call upon him. Giving up on God and refusing to turn away from sin and disbelief results from pride and the loss of hope in God.

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