

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)

“We need to begin with the renewal of a culture of life within Christian communities themselves. Too often it happens that believers, even those who take an active part in the life of the Church, end up by separating their Christian faith from its ethical requirements concerning life, and thus fall into moral subjectivism and certain objectionable ways of acting. With great openness and courage, we need to question how widespread is the culture of life today among individual Christians, families, groups and communities in our Dioceses. With equal clarity and determination we must identify the steps we are called to take in order to serve life in all its truth. At the same time, we need to promote a serious and in-depth exchange about basic issues of human life with everyone, including non-believers, in intellectual circles, in the various professional spheres and at the level of people's everyday life.”

~POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II, ENCYCLICAL *EVANGELIUM VITAE*, 95

Monday, October 21 ~ Twenty-Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 12:13-21 Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me.” He replied to him, “Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?” Then he said to the crowd, “Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one’s life does not consist of possessions.” Then he told them a parable. “There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest. He asked himself, ‘What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?’ And he said, ‘This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself, “Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!”’ But God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?’ Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God.”

Meditation: In the Gospel parable of the rich fool Jesus gives a lesson on using material possessions, which contains a warning to beware of all covetousness. To “covet” is to wish to get wrongfully what another person possesses or to begrudge what God gave him or her. Jesus restates the commandment “do not covet”, but he also states that a person's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. In this little parable Jesus probes our heart – where is your treasure? Treasure has a special connection to the heart, the place of desire and longing, the place of will and focus. The thing we most set our heart on is our highest treasure. What do you treasure most?

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. 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: During the time that Jesus walked this earth it was customary for people to take their disputes to the rabbis for them to settle. Jesus refuses such a case and instead gives the disputant a parable to “mull over.” How would you react if Jesus refused to settle your dispute, but gave you a parable instead? What is the point of Jesus' story about a wealthy landowner and why does he call him a fool? Jesus does not fault him for his industriousness, but for his egoism and selfishness. Like the parable of the rich man who refused to give any help to the beggar Lazarus (ref. Luke 16:19-31), this man had lost the capacity to be concerned for others. His life was consumed with his possessions and his only interests were in himself. His death was the final loss of his soul! How sad! Do you prize earthly possessions more than heavenly treasure and eternal life with Christ?

Tuesday, October 22 ~ Twenty-Ninth Week in Ordinary Time Saint John Paul II, Pope

Holy Gospel: Luke 12:35-38 Jesus said to his disciples: "Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master's return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants."

Meditation: This parable contains a lesson in faithfulness and a warning against sloth. Why is faithfulness so important to God? For one, it's the foundation for any lasting and meaningful relationship. Faithfulness or fidelity allows us to persevere in living out an unswerving commitment. The Lord is committed to us in a bond of unbreakable love and fidelity. That is what covenant means – keeping one's word, promise, and commitment no matter how tough or difficult it gets. Faithfulness is a key character trait of God and one that he expects of us. Fortunately God gives the grace and strength to be faithful. He also rewards faithfulness. Why is fidelity, commitment, and faithfulness so difficult today? Many today in western society extol freedom over fidelity and don't want to be bound to an unknown or uncertain future. It's regarded as inconvenient and a burden to the pursuit of the individual's interests. We badly need to recover this virtue, not only for our own sake, but for the sake of future generations as well. If we want to pass on the faith then we need to first be faithful models for our young people.

Prayer: O God, who are rich in mercy and who willed that Saint John Paul the Second should preside as Pope over your universal Church, grant, we pray, that instructed by his teaching, we may open our hearts to the saving grace of Christ, the sole Redeemer of mankind. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Faithfulness demands consistency, a determination to stay the course and see the task to its completion. God loves faithfulness. That is why we can always expect God to give us what he promises. In turn, God expects us to be faithful to him and to one another. How can we grow in faithfulness? God's grace shows us the way. When we are faithful in the little tasks and promises we make, we learn to be faithful in the bigger and more important responsibilities and tasks entrusted to us. Our reward is to receive God's commendation – "well done good and faithful servant" (ref. Matt. 25:21).

About this Optional Memorial to Saint John Paul II: The Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship has approved the insertion of the optional memorial of Saint John Paul II in the proper calendar of the dioceses of the United States for today. Charles Joseph Wojtyla was born in 1920 in Wadowice, Poland. After his ordination to the priesthood and theological studies in Rome, he returned to his homeland and resumed various pastoral and academic tasks. He became first auxiliary bishop and, in 1964, Archbishop of Krakow and took part in the Second Vatican Council. On 16 October 1978 he was elected pope and took the name John Paul II. His exceptional apostolic zeal, particularly for families, young people and the sick, led him to numerous pastoral visits throughout the world. Among the many fruits which he has left as a heritage to the Church are above all his rich Magisterium and the promulgation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as well as the *Code of Canon Law* for the Latin Church and for the Eastern Churches. In Rome on 2 April 2005, the eve of the Second Sunday of Easter (or of Divine Mercy), he departed peacefully in the Lord. On Divine Mercy Sunday of 2014, Saint John Paul II was officially canonized a saint, along with Saint John XXIII, Pope.

Wednesday, October 23 ~ Twenty-Ninth Week in Ordinary Time Saint John of Capistrano, Priest

Holy Gospel: Luke 12:39-48 Jesus said to his disciples: "Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come." Then Peter said, "Lord, is this parable meant for us or for everyone?" And the Lord replied, "Who, then, is the faithful and prudent steward whom the master will put in charge of his servants to distribute the food allowance at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master on arrival finds doing so. Truly, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property. But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, to eat and drink and get drunk, then that servant's master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour and will punish the servant severely and assign him a place with the unfaithful. That servant who knew his master's will but did not make preparations nor act in accord with his will shall be beaten severely; and the servant who was ignorant of his master's will but acted in a way deserving of a severe beating shall be beaten only lightly. Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more."

Meditation: This parable also contains a lesson in faithfulness. The Lord loves faithfulness and richly rewards those who are faithful to him. What is faithfulness? It's keeping one's word, promise, and commitments no matter how tough or difficult it gets. Faithfulness is a key character trait of God and one that he expects of us. Fortunately God gives the grace and strength to remain faithful. He also rewards faithfulness. The joy and privilege of being a son or daughter of God carries with it an awesome responsibility. The Lord expects us to make good use of the gifts and graces he gives to us. The more he gives, the more he requires. The temptation while the Master is away is to put off for tomorrow what we know the Master expects us to do today. How can we grow in faithfulness? God's grace shows us the way. When we are faithful in the little tasks and promises we make, we learn to be faithful in the bigger and more important responsibilities and tasks entrusted to us. Are you ready to give God an account of your stewardship?

Prayer: O God, who raised up Saint John of Capistrano to comfort your faithful people in tribulation, place us, we pray, under your safe protection and keep your Church in everlasting peace. Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. 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: What can a thief in the night teach us about the kingdom of God? Jesus loved to tell stories, many which ended with a dramatic and unexpected change of circumstances. Can you imagine a thief calling ahead to tell his victim when he would strike? Should we be surprised to see a thief making off with a great treasure left unguarded? What does this say about the treasure which God has entrusted to you and me? When God offers us his kingdom, he gives us a treasure beyond measure (read see the parable of the treasure hidden in a field and the pearl of great price in Matthew 13:44-46). What is this treasure of immeasurable value? The Lord himself is our treasure (Job 22:22-23) and the kingdom he offers us is a kingdom of peace, joy, and righteousness (Rom. 4:17). The Lord offers us a relationship with him as his sons and daughters and the promise of eternal life as well. The treasure is of far greater value than any earthly treasure and more secure! But it's possible to lose this treasure if we do not guard what has been entrusted to us by God. Is your treasure secure?

Thursday, October 24 ~ Twenty-Ninth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Anthony Claret, Bishop

Holy Gospel: Luke 12:49-53 Jesus said to his disciples: "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

Meditation: Jesus' sharp statement that he would cause division rather than peace within families must have shocked his disciples. Was he exaggerating? Jesus used a typical Hebrew hyperbole to drive home an important lesson. We often do the same when we want to emphasize something very strongly. Jesus' hyperbole, however, did contain a real warning that the gospel message does have consequences for our lives. It has the power to heal, restore, and unite those who believe its message. But the consequence of ignoring or rejecting the gospel can lead to many hurtful desires and seduction by the world. When Jesus spoke about division he likely had in mind the prophecy of Micah: a man's enemies are the men of his own household (Micah 7:6). The essence of Christianity is loyalty to Jesus Christ, a loyalty that takes precedence over every other relationship. The love of God compels us to choose who will be first in our lives. To place any relationship (or anything else) above God is a form of idolatry. Jesus challenges his disciples to examine who they love first and foremost. A true disciple loves God above all else and is willing to forsake all for Jesus Christ. Jesus insists that his disciples give him the loyalty which is only due to God, a loyalty which is higher than spouse or kin. It is possible that family and friends can become our enemies, if the thought of them keeps us from doing what we know God wants us to do. Does the love of Jesus Christ compel you to put God first in all you do (2 Corinthians 5:14)?

Prayer: O God, who for the evangelization of peoples strengthened the Bishop Saint Anthony Mary Claret with admirable charity and long-suffering, grant, through his intercession, that, seeking the things that are yours, we may earnestly devote ourselves to winning our brothers and sisters for Christ. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Do you want to be on fire for God? Jesus shocked his disciples when he declared that he would cast fire and cause division rather than peace upon the earth. What kind of fire did Jesus have in mind here? Fire in biblical times was associated with God and with his action in the world and in the lives of his people. God sometimes manifested his presence by use of fire, such as the burning bush which was not consumed when God spoke to Moses (Exodus 3:2). The image of fire was also used to symbolize God's glory (Ezekiel 1:4, 13), his protective presence (2 Kings 6:17), his holiness (Deut. 4:24), righteous judgment (Zechariah 13:9), and his wrath against sin (Isaiah 66:15-16). It is also used of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11 and Acts 2:3). God's fire both purifies and cleanses, and it inspires a reverent fear of God and of his word in us.

Friday, October 25 ~ Twenty-Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 12:54-59 Jesus said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west you say immediately that it is going to rain—and so it does; and when you notice that the wind is blowing from the south you say that it is going to be hot—and so it is. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know how to interpret the present time? "Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? If you are to go with your opponent before a magistrate, make an effort to settle the matter on the way; otherwise your opponent will turn you over to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the constable, and the constable throw you into prison. I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny."

Meditation: None of us has the power and strength of will for overcoming sin and evil on our own resources. We stand in constant need of God's strength and protection. That is why scripture uses vivid language to describe God as our rock, fortress, and mighty defense. We are also vulnerable to Satan's lies and deceptions and our own blindness of spirit for recognizing sin in our lives. That is why we need God's help for distinguishing truth from error. Fortunately the Lord Jesus, who is our Judge, is also our Advocate who pleads for us at the right hand of the Father in heaven. The light of Christ reveals what is in our hearts and his grace frees us from the tyranny of sin, hurtful desires, and addictions. God's call is urgent and his grace is available for total freedom and transformation in Christ. Are you ready for his saving grace and healing action in your life?

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. 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: In reading sacred scripture Jesus wants to wake us up saying: "Hey you...wake up! Can't you see who is standing right in front of you speaking to you? It's me! I have a message of love and freedom and no one is listening!" Sometimes we are oblivious to the miracle of Jesus being in our lives, standing right in front of us. We are too busy and distracted to see it. He wants to grab our attention away from so many things that distract us and he wants to tell us he loves us - "You see me in the obvious places, like in Church," he might be saying to us. "But what about during the rest of the week?" He wants to strip away the fears, challenges and anxieties that distract us, heal us of our angers and our grudges, and give us meaning, direction, purpose, joy and contentment. Too often we use our energy and focus to remind ourselves of the people we resent and those who have hurt us or the pain we carry from our earlier lives. What Jesus offers us is a healing, if only we can believe how much we are loved by him. Only in that place of healing can we see what we have been missing all along - Jesus standing in front of us, holding our face in his hands, telling us how much he loves us.

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops;
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