

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)

“Today Christ is asking each of you the same question: do you love Me? He is not asking you whether you know how to speak to crowds, whether you can direct an organization or manage an estate. He is asking you to love Him. All the rest will ensue.” ~POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II

Monday, October 28 ~ Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time Feast of Saints Simon and Jude, Apostles

Holy Gospel: Luke 6:12-16 Jesus went up to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named Apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, Simon who was called a Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Meditation: In choosing the 12 Apostles, we see a characteristic feature of God's work – Jesus chose very ordinary people, from everyday walks of life. Sinners all, they were non-professionals, who had no wealth or position. They were chosen from the common people who did ordinary things, had no special education, and no social advantages. Jesus wanted ordinary people who could take an assignment and do it extraordinarily well. He chose these men, not for what they were, but for what they would be capable of becoming under his direction and power. When the Lord calls us to serve, we must not shrug back because we think that we have little or nothing to offer. The Lord takes what ordinary people, like us, can offer and uses it for greatness in his kingdom.

Prayer: O God, who by the blessed Apostles have brought us to acknowledge your name, graciously grant, through the intercession of Saints Simon and Jude, that the Church may constantly grow by increase of the peoples who believe in you. 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 is God's call to you? And are you responding to God's call? Just as Jesus called the 12 Apostles in various ways to “Come, follow me...” Jesus extends this same invitation to each one of us, to share in his mission, to live our lives according to the laws of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ. We, too, are ordinary, everyday people, all capable of achieving many things – great and small – as Christ's followers, as his disciples. What's holding you back from giving yourself entirely over to God? Are you ready to respond to Jesus' invitation of “Come, follow me...” or is something holding you back?

Tuesday, October 29 ~ Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 13:18-21 Jesus said, “What is the Kingdom of God like? To what can I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that a man took and planted in the garden. When it was fully grown, it became a large bush and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches.” Again he said, “To what shall I compare the Kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch of dough was leavened.”

Meditation: What can mustard seeds and leaven teach us about the kingdom of God? The tiny mustard seed literally grew to be a tree which attracted numerous birds because they loved the little black mustard seed it produced. God's kingdom works in a similar fashion. It starts from the smallest beginnings in the hearts of men and women who are receptive to God's word. And it works unseen and causes a transformation from within. Leaven is another powerful agent of change. A lump of dough left to itself remains just what it is, a lump of dough. But when the leaven is added to it a transformation takes place which produces rich and wholesome bread when heated -- the staple of life for humans. The kingdom of God produces a transformation in those who receive the new life which Jesus Christ offers. When we yield to Jesus Christ, our lives are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Paul the

Apostle says, "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Cor. 4:7). Do you believe in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit?

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, increase our faith, hope and charity, and make us love what you command, so that we may merit what you promise. 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.

Contemplation: Jesus answers his own rhetorical questions with marvelous images -- the tiny seed that grows into the large bush, the yeast that transforms the flour into an abundance of bread. We know this -- that a small thing can have a big effect, as we have known a suggestion, a hope, an idea -- followed -- to lead to a whole career or way of life. From a chance meeting comes a fruitful relationship; from a small kindness comes -- well, salvation. To me, this is about Faith and Hope -- especially that my little faith and smaller abilities may yet help build "the Kingdom of Heaven." So although I continue to weep and groan, I pray each day, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done." A good question for today is: What can I do today that might be the seed or the bit of yeast that will grow into the Kingdom for others? That's a good question, and may be the right question for my readers. But -- true confession here! -- having considered this Gospel, I've discovered the question truly rhetorical (because I have an answer) that I've been trying to avoid -- that I am finally asking myself today is: What apparently little thing must I change in my life so that God may reign in me?

Wednesday, October 30 ~ Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 13:22-30 Jesus passed through towns and villages, teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough. After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, then will you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply, 'I do not know where you are from.' And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' Then he will say to you, 'I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!' And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out. And people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the Kingdom of God. For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

Meditation: What does the image of a simple, ordinary door say to us about the kingdom of God? Jesus' story about the door being shut to those who come too late suggests they had offended their host and deserved to be excluded. It was customary for teachers in Jesus' time to close the door on tardy students and not allow them back for a whole week in order to teach them a lesson in discipline and faithfulness. Jesus told this story in response to the question of who will make it to heaven. Many rabbis held that all Israel would be saved, except for a few blatant sinners who excluded themselves! After all, they were specially chosen by God when he established a covenant with them.

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, increase our faith, hope and charity, and make us love what you command, so that we may merit what you promise. 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: Notice how Jesus doesn't directly answer the question. But his response is nonetheless unsettling on two counts. First, Jesus surprised his listeners by saying that one's membership as a covenanted people does not automatically mean entry into the kingdom of God. Second, Jesus asserts that many from the gentile nations would enter God's kingdom. God's invitation is open to Jew and Gentile alike. But Jesus warns that we can be excluded if we do not strive to enter by the narrow door. What did Jesus mean by this expression? The door which Jesus had in mind was himself. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved (John 10:9). Jesus opens the way for us to enter into God's kingdom through the cross where he laid down his life as an atoning sacrifice for each of our sins. If we want to enter and remain citizens of God's kingdom, then each of us must follow Jesus in the way of the cross. The word "strive" can also be translated "agony." To enter the kingdom of God one must struggle against the forces of temptation to sin and whatever holds us back from doing the will of God (even apathy, indifference, and compromise, to name a few).

Thursday, October 31 ~ Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 13:31-35 Some Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "Go away, leave this area because Herod wants to kill you." He replied, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and I

perform healings today and tomorrow, and on the third day I accomplish my purpose. Yet I must continue on my way today, tomorrow, and the following day, for it is impossible that a prophet should die outside of Jerusalem.' "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were unwilling! Behold, your house will be abandoned. But I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*"

Meditation: Jesus compares his longing for Jerusalem with a mother hen gathering her brood under her protective wings. Psalm 91 speaks of God's protection in such terms: "He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge" (Psalm 91:4). Jesus willingly set his face toward Jerusalem, knowing that he would meet certain betrayal, rejection, and death on a cross. His death on the cross, however, brought about victory and salvation, not only for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but for all – both Jew and Gentile – who would accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Jesus' prophecy is a two-edged sword, pointing to his victory over sin and death and foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and the dire consequences for all who would reject him and his saving message. While the destruction of Jerusalem's temple was determined (it was razed by the Romans in 70 A.D.) there remained for its inhabitants a narrow open door leading to deliverance. Jesus says: I am the door; whoever enters by me will be saved (ref. John 10:9). The Lord Jesus opens the way for each of us to have direct access to God who adopts us as his children and who makes his home with us.

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, increase our faith, hope and charity, and make us love what you command, so that we may merit what you promise. 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 make room in your life for Jesus Christ? The Lord is knocking at the door of your heart (ref. Revelations 3:20) and he wishes to enter into a close personal relationship with you. Receive him who is the giver of expectant faith, unwavering hope, and undying love. And long for the true home which God has prepared for you in his heavenly city, Jerusalem (ref. Revelations 21:2-4). Think about it: why would anyone not want to enter into a close personal relationship with Christ?

Friday, November 1 ~ Thirty-First Week in Ordinary Time Solemnity of All Saints

Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12a When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

Meditation: The beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness that God has placed in every heart. They teach us the final end to which God calls us, namely the coming of God's kingdom (Matthew 4:17), the vision of God (Matthew 5:8; 1 John 2; 1), entering into the joy of the Lord (Matthew 25:21-23) and into his rest (Hebrews 4:7-11). Jesus' beatitudes also confront us with decisive choices concerning the life we pursue here on earth and the use we make of the goods he puts at our disposal. God alone satisfies. Theresa of Avila's prayer book contained a bookmark which she wrote: "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; all things pass: God never changes. Patience achieves all it strives for. Whoever has God lacks nothing, God alone suffices." Is God enough for you? God offers us the greatest good possible – abundant life in Jesus Christ (John 10:10) and the promise of unending joy and happiness with God. Do you seek the highest good, the total good, which is above all else?

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, by whose gift we venerate in one celebration the merits of all the Saints, bestow on us, we pray, through the prayers of so many intercessors, an abundance of the reconciliation with you for which we earnestly long. 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 is the good life which God intends for us? And how is it related with the ultimate end or purpose of life? Is it not our desire and longing for true happiness, which is none other than the complete good, the sum of all goods, leaving nothing more to be desired? Jesus addresses this question in his sermon on the mount. The heart of Jesus' message is that we can live a very happy life. The call to

holiness, to be saints who joyfully pursue God's will for their lives, can be found in these ten beatitudes. Jesus' beatitudes sum up our calling or vocation – to live a life of the beatitudes. The word beatitude literally means "happiness" or "blessedness". Living a life of Christ will bring us true joy, true happiness – everything else of this world is fleeting.

Saturday, November 2 ~ Thirty-First Week in Ordinary Time Feast of All Souls

Holy Gospel: John 6:37-40 Jesus said to the crowds: "Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day."

Meditation: What kind of future are you preparing for? What about the life to come after our death? God puts in the heart of every living person the desire for unending life and happiness with him. While death claims each of us at the appointed time, God gives us something which death cannot touch -- his own divine life and sustaining power. In the Old Testament, one of the greatest testimonies of faith and hope in the midst of great suffering and pain is that of Job: For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another (Job 19:25-27).

Prayer: Listen kindly to our prayers, O Lord, and, as our faith in your Son, raised from the dead, is deepened, so may our hope of resurrection for your departed servants also find new strength. 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.

An additional prayer for those who have died: Almighty God, through the death of Your Son on the Cross, You destroyed our death; through His rest in the tomb You hallowed the graves of all who believe in You; and through His rising again You restored us to eternal life. God of the living and the dead, accept our prayers for those who have died in Christ and who are buried with Him in the hope of rising again. Since they were true to Your name on earth, let them praise You for ever in the joy of heaven. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. May the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Contemplation: Yesterday we celebrated "All Saints" day; today we celebrate "All Souls" day as a day of remembrance and honor to those who have died. As we commemorate this day, it seems much like our Memorial Day civic holiday – without the veteran aspect of the holiday. What is the difference between our celebrations? On All Saints Day we pray to those saints in heaven to intercede for us. And on occasion this includes someone we know and who has been a strong part of our life. But on All Souls Day we pray for our loved ones who have died and ask the Lord to admit them to their eternal reward. Our readings encourage us to open up our minds and hearts to the mystery of God's love for us. We very easily can focus our attention on what we are missing as we remember our family and friends who have died. And this very human emotion is strong and is good and is part of our human nature which God has created. But God also has called us to trust in His promises of salvation and an eternal reward. Jesus reveals himself in many countless ways to those who seek him with eyes of faith. When we read the word of God in the bible Jesus speaks to us and reveals to us the mind and heart of the Father. When we approach the altar of the Lord, Jesus offers himself in the Eucharist as spiritual food which produces the very life of God within us (I am the bread of life, John 6:35). He promises unbroken fellowship and freedom from the fear of being forsaken or cut off from everlasting life with God. And he offers us the hope of sharing in his resurrection. Is your hope and desire to see God face to face?

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops;
prayers are from *The Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing, 2011;
information about saints, solemnities, feasts and memorials courtesy of Catholic Culture.

frlumpe:2019

