

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)

“Prayer is powerful! It fills the earth with mercy, it makes the Divine clemency pass from generation to generation; right along the course of the centuries wonderful works have been achieved through prayer.” ~SAINT FRANCES XAVIER CABRINI

Monday, November 11 ~ Thirty-Second Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Martin of Tours, Bishop
~ Veterans’ Day ~

Holy Gospel: Luke 17:1-6 Jesus said to his disciples, “Things that cause sin will inevitably occur, but woe to the one through whom they occur. It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he wrongs you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times saying, ‘I am sorry,’ you should forgive him.” And the Apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” The Lord replied, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”

Meditation: While Jesus warns against the sin of bad example and scandal, he also demonstrates the power of faith for overcoming temptation and obstacles. We often encounter challenges and difficulties in life which seem beyond our power or capacity to handle. What appears impossible to human power is possible to those who believe in God's power. Faith is a gift freely given by God to help us know God personally, to understand his truth, and to live in the power of his love. God expects more from us than we can do by ourselves. Faith in God is the key for removing obstacles and difficulties which keep us from doing his will. We are his servants, and he is ever ready to work through us and in us for his glory. For faith to be effective it must be linked with trust and obedience — an active submission to God and a willingness to do whatever he commands. Do you trust in the grace and strength which God freely gives to help us resist temptation and overcome obstacles in doing his will?

Prayer: O God, who are glorified in the Bishop Saint Martin both by his life and death, make new, we pray, the wonders of your grace in our hearts, that neither death nor life may separate us from your love. 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: So what is the driving force in your life? Jesus speaks of two forces at work in our lives — the power of temptation to sin and cause harm and the power of faith to overcome obstacles and difficulties that stand in the way of loving God and our neighbor. The Greek word for temptation (*scandalon*) is exactly the same as the English word “scandal.” The original meaning of scandal is a trap or a stumbling block which causes one to trip and fall. The scriptures warn us about the snare or enticement to go astray and to do what is evil. Keep me from the trap which they have laid for me, and from the snares of evildoers! (Psalm 141:9) Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling (1 John 2:10). The Jews held that it was an unforgivable sin to teach another to sin. If we teach another to sin, he or she in turn may teach still another, until a train of sin is set in motion with no foreseeable end. Jesus warns his disciples of the terrible responsibility that they must set no stumbling block in the way of another, that is, not give offense or bad example that might lead another to sin. The young in faith are especially vulnerable to the bad example of those who should be passing on the faith.

An additional prayer on Veterans Day: We ask for blessings on all those who have served their country in the armed forces. We ask for healing for the veterans who have been wounded, in body and soul, in conflicts around the globe. We pray especially for the young men and women, in the thousands, who are coming home from Iraq with injured bodies and traumatized spirits. Bring solace to them, O Lord;

may we pray for them when they cannot pray. We ask for an end to wars and the dawning of a new era of peace, as a way to honor all the veterans of past wars. Bless all the soldiers who served in non-combatative posts; may their calling to service continue in their lives in many positive ways. Give us all the creative vision to see a world which, grown weary with fighting, Moves to affirming the life of every human being and so moves beyond war. Hear our prayer, O Prince of Peace, hear our prayer. Amen.

Tuesday, November 12 ~ Thirty-Second Week in Ordinary Time Saint Josaphat, Bishop and Martyr

Holy Gospel: Luke 17:7-10 Jesus said to the Apostles: "Who among you would say to your servant who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here immediately and take your place at table'? Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished'? Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'"

Meditation: How can we love others selflessly and unconditionally? God himself is love (ref. 1 John 4:16) and he fills our hearts with the boundless love that gives whatever is good for the sake of another (Romans 5:5). If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us (ref. 1 John 4:12). God honors the faithful servant who loves and serves others generously. He is ever ready to work through and in us for his glory. We must remember, however, that God can never be indebted to us. We have no claim on him. His love compels us to give him our best! And when we have done our best, we have simply done our duty. We can never outmatch God in doing good and showing love. God loves without measure. Does the love of God compel you to give your best?

Prayer: Stir up in your Church, we pray, O Lord, the Spirit that filled Saint Josaphat as he laid down his life for the sheep, so that through his intercession we, too, may be strengthened by the same Spirit and not be afraid to lay down our life for others. 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: Are you ready to give the Lord your best, regardless of what it might cost you? Perhaps we are like the laborer in Jesus' parable who expected special favor and reward for going the extra mile? How unfair for the master to compel him to give more than what was expected! Don't we love to assert our rights, with expressions of "I will give only what is required and no more!" But who can satisfy the claims of love? Jesus used this parable of the dutiful servant to explain that we can never put God in our debt or make the claim that God owes us something. We must regard ourselves as God's servants, just as Jesus came "not to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). We must remember that service of God and of neighbor is both a voluntary or "free act" in addition to being a sacred duty. One can volunteer for public service or be compelled to do service for one's country. Likewise, God expects us to give him the worship and praise which is his due. And he gladly accepts the free-will offering of our lives to him and to his service. What makes our offering pleasing to God is the love we express in the gift of self-giving. True love is sacrificial, generous, and selfless.

November 13 ~ Thirty-Second Week in Ordinary Time Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, Virgin

Holy Gospel: Luke 17:11-19 As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten lepers met him. They stood at a distance from him and raised their voice, saying, "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!" And when he saw them, he said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." As they were going they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."

Meditation: The word "mercy" literally means "sorrowful at heart." But mercy is something more than compassion, or heartfelt sorrow at another's misfortune. Compassion empathizes with the sufferer. But mercy goes further; it removes suffering. A merciful person shares in another's misfortune and suffering as if it were his own. And he or she will do everything in their power to dispel that misery. Mercy is also connected with justice. Saint Thomas Aquinas once said that mercy "does not destroy justice, but is a certain kind of fulfillment of justice...Mercy without justice is the mother of dissolution; (and) justice without mercy is cruelty." Pardon without repentance negates justice. So what is the significance of these

ten lepers asking for mercy? They know they are in need of healing, not just physical, but spiritual healing as well. They approach Jesus with contrition and faith because they believe that he can release the burden of guilt and suffering and make restoration of body and soul possible. Their request for mercy is both a plea for pardon and release from suffering. Jesus gives mercy to all who ask with faith and contrition.

Prayer: God our Father, who called Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini from Italy to serve the immigrants of America, by her example, teach us to have concern for the stranger, the sick, and all those in need, and by her prayers help us to see Christ in all the men and women we meet. 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.

Intercessory Prayer: Almighty and Eternal Father, giver of all gifts, show us Your mercy, and grant, we ask You, through the merits of Your faithful Servant, Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, that all who invoke her intercession may obtain what they desire according to the good pleasure of Your Holy Will. Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, beloved spouse of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, intercede for us that the favor we now ask may be granted (mention your need at this point). Amen.

Contemplation: Why did only one leper out of ten – a Samaritan – return to show thanks and gratitude? Gratefulness is related to grace – gratitude is the homage of the heart which responds with graciousness in expressing an act of thanksgiving. The Samaritan approached Jesus reverently and gave praise to God. If we do not recognize and appreciate the mercy shown to us we become ungrateful. Ingratitude is forgetfulness or a poor return for kindness received. Ingratitude easily leads to lack of charity and intolerance towards others, as well as to other sins, such as discontent, dissatisfaction, complaining, grumbling, pride and presumption. How often have we been ungrateful to our parents, pastors, teachers, and neighbors? Do you express gratitude to God for his mercy towards you and do you show mercy to your neighbor? When is the last time you thanked God for all that he has given you?

Thursday, November 14 ~ Thirty-Second Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 17:20-25 Asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus said in reply, "The coming of the Kingdom of God cannot be observed, and no one will announce, 'Look, here it is,' or, 'There it is.' For behold, the Kingdom of God is among you." Then he said to his disciples, "The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. There will be those who will say to you, 'Look, there he is,' or 'Look, here he is.' Do not go off, do not run in pursuit. For just as lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must suffer greatly and be rejected by this generation."

Meditation: Jesus identified himself with the "Day of the Lord". "Son of man" was understood as a Messianic title for the one who would come not only to establish God's kingdom but who would come as Judge of the living as well as the dead. Jesus points to his second coming when he will return to complete the work of restoration and final judgment. While we do not know the time of his return, we will not mistake it when it happens. It will be apparent to all, both believers and non-believers as well. When the Pharisees asked Jesus what sign would indicate the "Day of the Lord", Jesus replied that only one sign would point to that day and that sign was Jesus himself. Jesus surprised the Jews of his time by announcing that God's kingdom was already present among them in his very person – the Son of God sent from the Father to redeem the world from sin and destruction. In Jesus we see the power and the glory of God's kingdom. His power overthrew the powers of darkness and sin. Jesus knew that the only way to victory was through the cross. On that cross he defeated death and canceled the debt of sin for us. The victory of his cross opens the way for us to become citizens of God's kingdom. Do you seek the coming of God's kingdom with joyful hope?

Prayer: Almighty and merciful God, graciously keep from us all adversity, so that, unhindered in mind and body alike, we may pursue in freedom of heart the things that are yours. 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: Why did Jesus associate lightning with the "Day of the Lord?" In the arid climate of Palestine, storms were infrequent and seasonal. They appeared suddenly and unexpectedly, seemingly out of nowhere, covering everything in thick darkness. With little or no warning lightning filled the sky with its piercing flashes of flaming light. Its power struck terror and awe in those who tried to flee from its presence. Jesus warned the Pharisees that the "Son of man" would come in like manner, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, on the clouds of heaven to bring God's judgment on the "Day of the Lord". No special sign will be needed to announce his appearance, no will his presence and power be veiled or hidden; all will recognize him as clearly as the lightning in the sky.

Friday, November 15 ~ Thirty-Second Week in Ordinary Time Saint Albert the Great, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Holy Gospel: Luke 17:26-37 Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man; they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage up to the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Similarly, as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building; on the day when Lot left Sodom, fire and brimstone rained from the sky to destroy them all. So it will be on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, someone who is on the housetop and whose belongings are in the house must not go down to get them, and likewise one in the field must not return to what was left behind. Remember the wife of Lot. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses it will save it. I tell you, on that night there will be two people in one bed; one will be taken, the other left. And there will be two women grinding meal together; one will be taken, the other left." They said to him in reply, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the body is, there also the vultures will gather."

Meditation: What does Jesus mean when he says that one person will be taken and another left? God judges each person individually on how they have responded to his grace and invitation to live as citizens of his kingdom. We cannot pass off personal responsibility to someone else, such as family, spouse, or friends. No one can discharge his or her duty by proxy or association. The good news is that God gives grace and help to all who seek him with faith. The Lord Jesus gives us his Holy Spirit so that we may have the wisdom, help, and strength we need to turn from sin to his way of love and holiness. The Lord's warning of judgment causes dismay for those who are unprepared, but it brings joyful hope to those who eagerly wait for his return in glory. God's judgment is good news for those who are ready to meet him. Their reward is God himself, the source of all truth, beauty, goodness, love and everlasting life. The people in Noah's time ignored the Lord's warning of judgment. They missed the boat, literally! Whose boat are you taking — the world's boat to success and happiness or God's boat to heaven and bliss with him? Those whose hope is firmly anchored in heaven will not be disappointed when God's judgment comes.

Prayer: O God, who made the Bishop Saint Albert great by his joining of human wisdom to divine faith, grant, we pray, that we may so adhere to the truths he taught, that through progress in learning we may come to a deeper knowledge and love of 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: Jesus quotes a familiar proverb to his audience: "Where the body is, there the eagles (or vultures) will be gathered together." Eagles, like vultures, are attracted to carrion. The Book of Job describes the eagle spying out its prey from afar (Job 39:29). What's the point of this analogy? It's inevitable that a thing will happen when the necessary conditions are fulfilled. The return of the Lord is certain, but the time is unknown. The Lord's judgment comes swiftly and often unexpectedly. Jesus warns his listeners to not be caught off guard when that day arrives. It will surely come in God's good time! The question is, are you ready – ready right now, this very minute – for the second coming of Jesus Christ? If not, there's no time like the present.

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