

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)

“O most holy heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love you, and with lively sorrow for my sins I offer you this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure and wholly obedient to your will. Grant, Good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you. Protect me in the midst of danger. Comfort me in my afflictions. Give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. Amen.” ~PRAYER TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Monday, June 24 ~ Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time Solemnity of the Nativity of John the Baptist

Holy Gospel: Luke 1:57-66,80 When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name." So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him. The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Meditation: John the Baptist's life was fueled by one burning passion – to point others to Jesus Christ and to the coming of God's kingdom. Scripture tells us that John was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15, 41) by Christ himself, whom Mary had just conceived by the Holy Spirit. When Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, John leaped in the womb of Elizabeth as they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41). The fire of the Spirit dwelt in John and made him the forerunner of the coming Messiah. John was led by the Spirit into the wilderness prior to his ministry where he was tested and grew in the word of God. John's clothing was reminiscent of the prophet Elijah (see Kings 1:8). John broke the prophetic silence of the previous centuries when he began to speak the word of God to the people of Israel. His message was similar to the message of the Old Testament prophets who chided the people of God for their unfaithfulness and who tried to awaken true repentance in them. Among a people unconcerned with the things of God, it was his work to awaken their interest, unsettle them from their complacency, and arouse in them enough good will to recognize and receive Christ when he came. What is the significance of John the Baptist and his message for our lives? When God acts to save us he graciously fills us with his Holy Spirit and makes our faith come "alive" to his promises. Each and every day the Lord is ready to renew us in faith, hope, and love. Like John the Baptist, the Lord invites each of us to make our life a free-will offering to God. God wants to fill us with his glory all the days of our lives, from birth through death. Renew the offering of your life to God and give him thanks for his mercy and favor towards you.

Prayer: Grant, we pray, almighty God, that your family may walk in the way of salvation and, attentive to what Saint John the Precursor urged, may come safely to the One he foretold, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Do you marvel at the grace and work of God, especially in your personal life? The friends of Zechariah and Elizabeth marveled at the wonderful way in which God blessed them with a child. This child was destined by God for an important mission. The last verses in the last book of the Old Testament, taken from the prophet Malachi, speak of the Lord's messenger, the prophet Elijah who will return to "turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers" (ref. Malachi 4:6). We see

the beginning of the fulfillment of this word when the Angel Gabriel announced to Zechariah the marvelous birth and mission of John the Baptist (ref. Luke 1:17). When this newly born child was about to be named, as customary on the eighth day, his relatives quibbled over what name to give him. This child, however, has been named from above! And Elizabeth is firm in her faith and determined to see that God be glorified through this child. The name "John" means "the Lord is gracious". In the birth of John and in the birth of Jesus the Messiah we see the grace of God breaking forth into a world broken by sin and without hope. John's miraculous birth shows the mercy and favor of God in preparing his people for the coming of its Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Tuesday, June 25 ~ Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Matthew 7:6,12-14 Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, or throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot, and turn and tear you to pieces. Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the Law and the Prophets. Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few."

Meditation: Jesus' expression about "pearls before swine" is pretty familiar. Jesus' concern here is not with exclusivity, but with purity — the purity of the faith which has been entrusted to us by an all-loving and all-wise God. The early church referenced this expression with the Eucharist or the Lord's Table. In the liturgy of the early church, a proclamation was given shortly before communion: Holy things to the holy. In *The Didache* (the *Teachings of the Twelve Apostles*) it is stated: Let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those baptized into the name of the Lord; for, as regards this, the Lord has said, "Give not that which is holy unto dogs." The Lord invites us to his altar, but in doing so we must approach so worthily. Going to confession is always the most important step in preparing ourselves..

Prayer: Grant, O Lord, that we may always revere and love your holy name for you never deprive of your guidance those you set firm on the foundation of 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: We should strive to receive Holy Communion *regularly, gratefully, and worthily*. We may find ourselves in situations, however, where an examination of our conscience before God reveals to us that we should refrain from partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ. For in order to receive Holy Communion we must be in communion with God and with the Church. Mortal sin constitutes a rejection of communion with God and destroys the life of grace within us. Mortal sin is an act violating God's law that involves grave matter and that is performed with both full knowledge and complete consent of the will. If we are no longer in the state of grace because of mortal sin, we are seriously obliged to refrain from receiving Holy Communion until we are reconciled with God and the Church through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. While we remain members of the body of Christ and continue to be part of the Catholic Church, we have become *spiritually lifeless* or *dead* members. We no longer share in the common bond of the divine life of the Holy Spirit. Because our sin has separated us from God and from our brothers and sisters in Christ, we have forfeited our right to receive Holy Communion, for the Eucharist by its very nature expresses and nurtures this life-giving unity that the sinner has now lost. St. Paul warned the Corinthians that "whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor 11:27). Make a good confession!

Wednesday, June 26 ~ Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time **Optional Memorial ~ Father Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, Priest**

Holy Gospel: Matthew 7:15-20 Jesus said to his disciples: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. So by their fruits you will know them."

Meditation: What's the test of a true or false teacher? Jesus connects soundness with good fruit. Something is sound when it is free from defect, decay, or disease and is healthy. Good fruit is the result of sound living — living according to moral truth and upright character. The prophet Isaiah warned against the dangers of falsehood: Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness (Isaiah 5:20). The fruits of falsehood produce an easy religion which takes the iron out of religion, the cross out of Christianity, and any teaching which eliminates the hard sayings of Jesus, and which push the judgments of God into the background and makes us think lightly of sin.

Prayer: Grant, O Lord, that we may always revere and love your holy name, for you never deprive of your guidance those you set firm on the foundation of 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: What some people say claiming to be "the way" and what we "hear" might both have some resemblance of the truth, but, in fact, when you inspect it closely, it's actually false – it is a twisting of "the way, and the truth" of Jesus Christ. False prophets or teachers abound today as much as they did in biblical times. And, sadly, they attract great numbers of people because these false teachers water down the laws of God and the teachings of the Christ so that people who "hear" these false teachings no longer are challenged by God's laws or Christ's teachings. Many people seek the things of this earth, instead of looking heavenward; false teachings suffice for them. Such falsehoods do not help anyone grow in holiness, or conform our lives to follow the will of God – instead we impose our will upon Him. Falsehood, then, leads to wrong thinking, wrong actions, and a life contrary to God, His Son, and His one true Church. How do we avoid falsehood? By faithfully being true – true to God, His word, and His grace. Being true takes a keen ear and a sharp mind – both attentive because of the familiarity one has attained through reading and knowing scripture and the teachings of the one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, all of which nourish us. Those who are true to God know that their strength lies not in themselves but in God who supplies what we need. The fruit of a disciple is marked by faith, hope and love, justice, prudence, fortitude and temperance. Do you cultivate good fruit in your life and reject whatever produces bad fruit?

Thursday, June 27 ~ Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time

Optional Memorial ~ Saint Cyril of Amexandria, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Holy Gospel: 7:21-29 Jesus said to his disciples: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?' Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.'" "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined." When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Meditation: We live in a time when color-coded "threat levels" are part of the norm. We take these seriously, we don't mind the extra security measures, especially when traveling because we know it's for our own safety and security. Even outside of "threat levels" there are daily "threats" – severe weather, traffic accidents, and other events that are part of the challenges of life. If the threat of disaster or life-changing moment were to come your way, would you be ready to meet it and overcome it? When Jesus told the story of the builders he likely had the following proverb in mind: When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm for ever (ref. Proverbs 10:25). What's the significance of the story for us? The kind of foundation we build our lives upon will determine whether we can survive the storms that are sure to come. Builders usually lay their foundations when the weather and soil conditions are at their best. It takes foresight to know how a foundation will stand up against adverse conditions. Building a house on a flood plain, such as a dry river-bed, is a sure bet for disaster! Jesus prefaced his story with a warning: We may fool humans with our speech, but God cannot be deceived. He sees the heart as it truly is – with its motives, intentions, desires, and choices (ref. Psalm 139:2).

Prayer: O God, who made the Bishop Saint Cyril of Alexandria an invincible champion of the divine motherhood of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, grant, we pray, that we, who believe she is truly the Mother of God, may be saved through the Incarnation of Christ your Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: There is only one way in which a person's sincerity can be proved, and that is by one's practice. Fine and fancy words can never replace actions and good deeds. Our character is revealed in the choices we make, especially when we must choose between what is true or false, and good or evil. Do you cheat on an exam or on your income taxes, especially when it will cost you? Do you lie, or cover-up, when disclosing the truth will cause you pain or embarrassment? A true person is honest and reliable before God, neighbor, and oneself. Such a person's word can be taken as trustworthy. What can keep us from falsehood and disaster? If we make the Lord and his word the rock and foundation of our lives, then

nothing can shake us or keep us from God's presence and help. Is the Lord and his word the sure foundation of your life?

Friday, June 28 ~ Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

Holy Gospel: Luke 15:3-7 Jesus addressed this parable to the Pharisees and scribes: "What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance."

Meditation: The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ is *the* heart of love and compassion. This level of love and compassion is clearly revealed in the way he sought out sinners and outcasts of society. No one was excluded from his gracious presence unless they chose to stay away out of jealousy or mistrust. The scribes and Pharisees took great offense at Jesus because he freely associated with sinners and treated them graciously. The Pharisees had strict regulations about how they were to keep away from sinners, lest they incur defilement. They were not to entrust money to them or have any business dealings with them, nor trust them with a secret, nor entrust orphans to their care, nor accompany them on a journey, nor give their daughter in marriage to any of their sons, nor invite them as guests or be their guests. They were shocked with the way in which Jesus freely received sinners and ate with them. Sinners, nonetheless, were drawn to Jesus to hear him speak about the mercy of God. Jesus characteristically answered the Pharisees' charge with a parable or lesson drawn from everyday life. What does Jesus' story about a lost sheep tell us about God and his kingdom? Shepherds normally counted their sheep at the end of the day to make sure all were accounted for. Since sheep by their very nature are very social, an isolated sheep can quickly become bewildered and even neurotic. The shepherd's grief and anxiety is turned to joy when he finds the lost sheep and restores it to the fold. The shepherd searches until what he has lost is found. His persistence pays off. He instinctively shares his joy with the whole community. The poor are particularly good at sharing in one another's sorrows and joys. What was new in Jesus' teaching was the insistence that sinners must be sought out and not merely mourned for.

Prayer: Grant, we pray, almighty God, that we, who glory in the Heart of your beloved Son and recall the wonders of his love for us, may be made worthy to receive an overflowing measure of grace from that fount of heavenly gifts. 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 of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus – St. Margaret Mary Alacoque: O Sacred Heart of Jesus, to Thee I consecrate and offer up my person and my life, my actions, trials, and sufferings, that my entire being may henceforth only be employed in loving, honoring and glorifying Thee. This is my irrevocable will, to belong entirely to Thee, and to do all for Thy love, renouncing with my whole heart all that can displease Thee. I take Thee, O Sacred Heart, for the sole object of my love, the protection of my life, the pledge of my salvation, the remedy of my frailty and inconstancy, the reparation for all the defects of my life, and my secure refuge at the hour of my death. Be Thou, O Most Merciful Heart, my justification before God Thy Father, and screen me from His anger which I have so justly merited. I fear all from my own weakness and malice, but placing my entire confidence in Thee, O Heart of Love, I hope all from Thine infinite Goodness. Annihilate in me all that can displease or resist Thee. Imprint Thy pure love so deeply in my heart that I may never forget Thee or be separated from Thee. I beseech Thee, through Thine infinite Goodness, grant that my name be engraved upon Thy Heart, for in this I place all my happiness and all my glory, to live and to die as one of Thy devoted servants. Amen.

Contemplation: God does not rejoice in the loss of anyone. Instead God desires that all be saved and restored to fellowship with him. That is why the whole community of heaven rejoices when one sinner is found and restored to fellowship with God. Seekers of the lost are much needed today. Do you persistently pray and seek after those you know who have lost their way to God? Do you acknowledge that Jesus is King of our heart? Do you conform your heart to his Sacred Heart, expressing love and compassion to all whom you meet and interact with?

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