

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)

“Jesus’ words, ‘Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest’ (Mt 11:28) point to the mysterious path of grace that is revealed to the simple and gives new strength to those who are weary and tired. These words of Christ express the solidarity of the Son of Man with all those who are hurt and afflicted. How many people suffer in both body and soul! Jesus urges everyone to draw near to him – ‘Come to me!’ – and he promises them comfort and repose.

~POPE FRANCIS, EXCERPT FROM HIS MESSAGE ON THE 28TH WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

**Monday, February 10 ~ Fifth Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Scholastica, Virgin**

Holy Gospel: Mark 6:53-56 After making the crossing to the other side of the sea, Jesus and his disciples came to land at Gennesaret and tied up there. As they were leaving the boat, people immediately recognized him. They scurried about the surrounding country and began to bring in the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. Whatever villages or towns or countryside he entered, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak; and as many as touched it were healed.

Meditation: Faith is an entirely free gift which God makes to us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Believing and trusting in God to act in our lives is only possible by the grace and help of the Holy Spirit who moves the heart and converts it to God. The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the mind and helps us to understand, accept, and believe God's word. How do we grow in faith? By listening to God's word with trust and submission. Faith also grows through testing and perseverance. The Lord wants to teach us how to pray in faith for his will for our lives and for the things he wishes to give us to enable us to follow him faithfully and serve him generously. Jesus gave his disciples the perfect prayer which acknowledges God as our Father who provides generously for his children. The Lord's prayer teaches us to seek first the kingdom of God and to pray that God's will be accomplished in our lives. The Lord in turn, gives us what we need to live each day for his glory. The Lord is never too distant nor too busy to meet us and to give his blessing. Do you pray to the Father with confidence that he will show you his will and give you what you need to follow him? Ask the Lord to increase your faith and gratitude for his merciful love and provision for your life.

Prayer: As we celebrate anew the Memorial of the Virgin Saint Scholastica, we pray, O Lord, that, following her example, we may serve you with pure love and happily receive what comes from loving 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: Do you recognize the Lord's presence in your life? The gospel records that when Jesus disembarked from the boat the people immediately recognized him. What did they recognize in Jesus? A prophet, a healer, the Messiah, the Son of God? For sure they recognized that Jesus had power from God to heal and to make whole bodies, limbs, minds, and hearts that were beset with disease, affliction, and sin. What happened when they pressed upon him and touched the fringe of his garment? They were made well. The Lord Jesus is ever ready to meet our needs as well. Do you approach him with expectant faith?

**Tuesday, February 11 ~ Fifth Week in Ordinary Time
Our Lady of Lourdes; 28th World Day of the Sick**

Holy Gospel: John 2:1-11 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern

affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

Meditation: John's Gospel takes its shape from a series of signs, revealing Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God, and Savior of the world. This miracle story is the first of these signs. The marriage feast at Cana heralds that Messianic age had begun. And, as a result of the miracle at Cana, "his disciples began to believe in him." Are you truly a disciple of Christ? If so, do you believe in him?

Prayer: Grant us, O merciful God, protection in our weakness, that we, who keep the Memorial of the Immaculate Mother of God, may with the help of her intercession, rise up from our iniquities. 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 Our Lady of Lourdes: O ever-Immaculate Virgin, Mother of Mercy, health of the sick, refuge of sinners, comforter of the afflicted, you know my wants, my troubles, my sufferings; look with mercy on me. By appearing in the Grotto of Lourdes, you were pleased to make it a privileged sanctuary, whence you dispense your favors; and already many sufferers have obtained the cure of their infirmities, both spiritual and corporal. I come, therefore, with complete confidence to implore your maternal intercession. Obtain, O loving Mother, the grant of my requests. (mention your petition at this point in the prayer) Through gratitude for your favors, I will endeavor to imitate your virtues, that I may one day share your glory. Amen.

Send your prayers on-line to the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in Lourdes, France:
<https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/intention-priere/>

Contemplation: When Mary says to the servers "Do whatever he tells you..." we, too, are taught by these words that if we desire anything from Christ, we will not obtain our wishes unless we depend on him and him alone, look to him, pray to him, and, in short, do whatever he tells us. This is part of his invitation throughout scripture when Jesus says "Follow me." He is the shepherd and we are his flock. Thus, as a disciple, do you really follow Christ? Do you do whatever he teaches in scripture, follow his teachings, and incorporate them in your daily life?

About Our Lady of Lourdes: The many miracles which have been performed through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes prompted the Church to institute a special commemorative feast, the "Apparition of the Immaculate Virgin Mary." The Office gives the historical background. Four years after the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854), the Blessed Virgin appeared a number of times to a very poor and holy girl named Bernadette. The actual spot was in a grotto on the bank of the Gave River near Lourdes. The Immaculate Conception had a youthful appearance and was clothed in a pure white gown and mantle, with an azure blue sash. A golden rose adorned each of her bare feet. On her first apparition, February 11, 1858, the Blessed Virgin bade the girl make the sign of the Cross piously and say the rosary with her. Bernadette saw her take the rosary that was hanging from her arms into her hands. This was repeated in subsequent apparitions. With childlike simplicity Bernadette once sprinkled holy water on the vision, fearing that it was a deception of the evil spirit; but the Blessed Virgin smiled pleasantly, and her face became even more lovely. The third time Mary appeared she invited the girl to come to the grotto daily for two weeks. Now she frequently spoke to Bernadette. On one occasion she ordered her to tell the ecclesiastical authorities to build a church on the spot and to organize processions. Bernadette also was told to drink and wash at the spring still hidden under the sand. Finally on the feast of the Annunciation, the beautiful Lady announced her name, "I am the Immaculate Conception." The report of cures occurring at the grotto spread quickly and the more it spread, the greater the number of Christians who visited the hallowed place. The publicity given these miraculous events on the one hand and the seeming sincerity and innocence of the girl on the other made it necessary for the bishop of Tarbes to institute a judicial inquiry. Four years later he declared the apparitions to be supernatural and permitted the public veneration of the Immaculate Conception in the grotto. Soon a chapel was erected, and since that time countless pilgrims come every year to Lourdes to fulfill promises or to beg graces.

Wednesday, February 12 ~ Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 7:14-23 Jesus summoned the crowd again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile." When he got home away from the crowd his disciples questioned him about the parable. He said to them, "Are even you likewise without understanding? Do you not realize that everything that goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters not the heart but the stomach and passes out into the latrine?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) "But what comes out of the man, that is what defiles him. From within the man, from his heart, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile."

Meditation: Remember the story of Cain and Abel, when Cain became jealous of his brother Abel and God warned Cain to guard his own heart: "Sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it" (ref. Genesis 4:7). Unfortunately, Cain did not take God's warning to heart. He allowed his jealousy to grow into spite and hatred for his brother, and he began to look for an opportunity to eliminate his brother altogether. When jealousy and other sinful desires come knocking at the door of your heart, how do you respond? Do you entertain them and allow them to overtake you? Do you slam the door to keep these sinful desires out? Fortunately God does not leave us alone in our struggle with hurtful desires and sinful tendencies. He gives us the grace and strength we need to resist and overcome sin when it approaches the door of our heart.

Prayer: Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your 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: Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ wants to set us free from the burden of guilt and from the destructive force of sin in our personal lives. He wants to purify our hearts and renew our minds so that we can love and act in every situation as he would love and act. The Lord is ready to change and purify our hearts through the grace and help of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. Like a physician who examines the wound before treating it, God through his Word and Spirit first brings sin into the light that we may recognize it for what it truly is and call upon his mercy and grace for pardon and healing. The Spirit of truth is our Consoler and Helper. His power and grace enables us to choose what is good and to reject what is evil. Do you believe in the power of God's love to heal, change, and transform your heart and mind?

Thursday, February 13 ~ Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 7:24-30 Jesus went to the district of Tyre. He entered a house and wanted no one to know about it, but he could not escape notice. Soon a woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him. She came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by birth, and she begged him to drive the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, "Let the children be fed first. For it is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." She replied and said to him, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's scraps." Then he said to her, "For saying this, you may go. The demon has gone out of your daughter." When the woman went home, she found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

Meditation: This passage describes the only occasion in which Jesus ministered outside of Jewish territory. (Tyre and Sidon were fifty miles north of Israel and still exist today in modern Lebanon.) A Gentile woman – an outsider who was not a member of the chosen people – puts Jesus on the spot by pleading with him to show mercy to her daughter who was tormented with an evil spirit. At first Jesus seemed to pay no attention to her, and this made his disciples feel embarrassed. Jesus very likely did this not to put the woman off, but rather to test her sincerity and to awaken faith in her.

Prayer: Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your 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: Jesus praises a Gentile woman for her persistent faith and for her affectionate love. She made the misery of her child her own and she was willing to suffer rebuff in order to obtain healing for her loved one. She also had indomitable persistence. Her faith grew in contact with the person of Jesus. She began with a request and she ended on her knees in worshipful prayer to the living God. No one who ever

sought Jesus with faith – whether Jew or Gentile – was refused his help. Do you seek Jesus with expectant faith?

Friday, February 14 ~ Fifth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Cyril, Monk, and Saint Methodius, Bishop

Holy Gospel: Mark 7:31-37 Jesus left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis. And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, "Ephphatha!" (that is, "Be opened!") And immediately the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly. He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it. They were exceedingly astonished and they said, "He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Meditation: When Jesus approaches a man who is both deaf and a stutterer, Jesus shows his considerateness for this man's predicament. Jesus takes him aside privately, not doubt to remove him from embarrassment with a noisy crowd of gawkers. Jesus then puts his fingers into the deaf man's ears and he touches the man's tongue with his own spittle to physically identify with this man's infirmity and to awaken faith in him. With a word of command the poor man's ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.

Prayer: O God, who enlightened the Slavic peoples through the brothers Saints Cyril and Methodius, grant that our hearts may grasp the words of your teaching, and perfect us as a people of one accord in true faith and right confession. 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 never turned anyone aside who approached him with sincerity and trust. And whatever Jesus did, he did well. He demonstrated both the beauty and goodness of God in his actions. Pope Saint Gregory the Great comments on this miracle: "The Spirit is called the finger of God. When the Lord puts his fingers into the ears of the deaf mute, he was opening the soul of man to faith through the gifts of the Holy Spirit." The Lord treats each of us with kindness and compassion and he calls us to treat one another in like kind. The Holy Spirit who dwells within us enables us to love as Jesus loves. Do you show kindness and compassion to your neighbors and do you treat them with considerateness as Jesus did?

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.

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**In the Year 2020
the Universal Church celebrates
the 150th anniversary of
QUAMQUAM PLURIES
ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII
ON DEVOTION TO SAINT JOSEPH
AND DECLARING SAINT JOSEPH
PATRON OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH**

An Ancient Prayer to Saint Joseph

O ST. JOSEPH, whose protection is so great, so strong, so prompt before the throne of God,
I place in thee all my interests and desires. O St. Joseph, assist me by thy powerful intercession
and obtain for me all spiritual blessings through thy foster Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord,
so that, having engaged here below thy heavenly power, I may offer thee my thanksgiving and homage.

O St. Joseph, I never weary contemplating thee and Jesus asleep in thine arms.
I dare not approach while He reposes near thy heart. Press Him in my name and kiss His fine head for me,
and ask Him to return the kiss when I draw my dying breath.
St. Joseph, Patron of departing souls, pray for me. Amen.