

# 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)

---

***“As Lent is the time for greater love, listen to Jesus' thirst... 'Repent and believe' Jesus tells us. What are we to repent? Our indifference, our hardness of heart. What are we to believe? Jesus thirsts even now, in your heart and in the poor -- He knows your weakness. He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you.”***

~SAINT TERESA OF CALCUTTA (MOTHER TERESA)

### Monday, March 2 ~ First Week in the Season of Lent

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46** Jesus said to his disciples: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.’ Then they will answer and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?’ He will answer them, ‘Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’ And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

**Meditation:** Jesus’ parable about goats and sheep is a call to action – now, today, get with it! Just as goats and sheep shared the same grazing ground during the day, people from all walks of life share the same life that God has given us. But in our daily living do we simply ignore the needs of others? Are we so focused on ourselves that we choose not to hear the cry of the poor and the oppressed? Do we adopt the mentality that taking care of those in need “is someone else’s job – I’m too busy”? In today’s Gospel Jesus is giving each and every one of us a list of things to do, and those who live our lives seeing to the needs of others will be deemed “righteous” and inherit eternal life; those who choose to not help those in need – those who fail to love thy neighbor as thyself – will go off to eternal punishment. The choice is clear and quite simple. The Day of Judgment will reveal who showed true love and compassion toward their neighbor. Open your hearts, folks, and love your neighbor as yourself – begin this form of charity toward others this Lent and carry it through the year, for the rest of your lives. Your eternal soul depends on it!

**Prayer:** Grant, almighty God, through the yearly observances of holy Lent, that we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ and by worthy conduct pursue their effects. 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:** At the core of this parable is the call to love. Almsgiving, helping to feed and clothe those in need, to visit the imprisoned – these are acts of love of others. Authentic love presents itself in all humility and with reverence toward the other and the other's integrity, identifying with that which is transcendent in both oneself and another. Authentic love requires a death of one’s own ego in order to accommodate the needs of charity and of others. Christ lived a life of love, and so must we if we are striving for authenticity in our discipleship of Christ. Learn to love without imposing limits on ourselves!

## Tuesday, March 3 ~ First Week in the Season of Lent Saint Katharine Drexel, Virgin

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 6:7-15** Jesus said to his disciples: "In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. "This is how you are to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. "If you forgive men their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions."

**Meditation:** Jesus gave his disciples then, and us today, the perfect prayer that dares to call God, Our Father. This prayer teaches us how to ask God for the things we really need, the things that matter not only for the present but for eternity as well. We can approach God our Father with confidence and boldness because Christ has opened the way to heaven for us through his death and resurrection. When we ask God for help, he fortunately does not give us what we deserve. Instead, he responds with grace and mercy. He is kind and forgiving towards us and he expects us to treat our neighbor the same.

**Prayer:** Look upon your family, Lord, that, through the chastening effects of bodily discipline, our minds may be radiant in your presence with the strength of our yearning for 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:** Consider what Saint John Cassian wrote about the Lord's Prayer and the necessity of forgiving others from the heart: "The mercy of God is beyond description. While he is offering us a model prayer he is teaching us a way of life whereby we can be pleasing in his sight. But that is not all. In this same prayer he gives us an easy method for attracting an indulgent and merciful judgment on our lives. He gives us the possibility of ourselves mitigating the sentence hanging over us and of compelling him to pardon us. What else could he do in the face of our generosity when we ask him to forgive us as we have forgiven our neighbor? If we are faithful in this prayer, each of us will ask forgiveness for our own failings after we have forgiven the sins of those who have sinned against us, not only those who have sinned against our Master. There is, in fact, in some of us a very bad habit. We treat our sins against God, however appalling, with gentle indulgence: but when by contrast it is a matter of sins against us ourselves, albeit very tiny ones, we exact reparation with ruthless severity. Anyone who has not forgiven from the bottom of the heart the brother or sister who has done him wrong will only obtain from this prayer his own condemnation, rather than any mercy." Thus we need to honestly ask ourselves: do I treat others as the Lord has instructed me – with compassion, mercy, steadfast love, and kindness?

## Wednesday, March 4 ~ First Week in the Season of Lent Saint Casimir of Poland

**Holy Gospel: Luke 11:29-32** While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them, "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here."

**Meditation:** We must remember that out of love God searches our hearts, not to condemn us, but to show us where we need His saving grace and help. He calls us to seek Him with true repentance, humility, and the honesty to see our sins for what they really are – a rejection of his love and will for our lives. God will transform us if we listen to and obey His word and allow His Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Make the sign of the cross that pray, asking the Lord to renew your mind and heart and to increase your thirst for His wisdom and to put His teachings and wisdom into practice each day of your life, in all situations, with all people.

**Prayer:** Look kindly, Lord, we pray, on the devotion of your people, that those who by self-denial are restrained in body may by the fruit of good works be renewed in mind. 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:** Adam and Eve, our first parents, are also the first sinners – the first of those who were instructed by God not to do something, and they freely chose to disobey God. Since then history shows

there have been generations of sinners – including you and me. Why do we choose to disobey God? Why do we sin against God who has given us everything? When we sin against God we show that we love someone or something above Him. Isn't that sad?! We put someone or something above God! Let's use this Lenten season to thoroughly examine our lives and our lifestyles – let's choose to follow God and His Son, Jesus Christ, and turn away from those people and things that have led us to sin against God. Let's undergo a conversion of mind and heart and once again love God above all things.

### **Thursday, March 5 ~ First Week in the Season of Lent**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 7:7-12** Jesus said to his disciples: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asked for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asked for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets."

**Meditation:** There is great power in fervent prayer from the heart, as Saint John Chrysostom once noted: "Prayer is an all-efficient panoply [i.e. 'a full suit of armor' or 'splendid array'], a treasure undiminished, a mine never exhausted, a sky unobstructed by clouds, a haven unruffled by storm. It is the root, the fountain, and the mother of a thousand blessings. It exceeds a monarch's power. ..I speak not of the prayer which is cold and feeble and devoid of zeal. I speak of that which proceeds from a mind outstretched, the child of a contrite spirit, the offspring of a soul converted – this is the prayer which mounts to heaven. ..The power of prayer has subdued the strength of fire, bridled the rage of lions, silenced anarchy, extinguished wars, appeased the elements, expelled demons, burst the chains of death, enlarged the gates of heaven, relieved diseases, averted frauds, rescued cities from destruction, stayed the sun in its course, and arrested the progress of the thunderbolt. In sum prayer has power to destroy whatever is at enmity with the good."

**Prayer:** Bestow on us, we pray, O Lord, a spirit of always pondering on what is right and of hastening to carry it out, and since without you we cannot exist, may we be enabled to live according to your will. 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' parable of the father feeding his son makes a startling claim: How much more will the heavenly Father give to those who ask! Our heavenly Father graciously gives beyond our expectations. Jesus taught his disciples to pray with confidence because the Heavenly Father in his goodness always answers prayers. That is why we can boldly pray: Give us this day our daily bread. Prayer flows from the love of God; and the personal love we show to our neighbor is fueled by the love that God has poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (ref. Romans 5:5). Jesus concludes his discourse on prayer with the reminder that we must treat our neighbor in the same way we wish to be treated by God and by others. We must not just avoid doing harm to our neighbor, we must actively seek his or her welfare. In doing so, we fulfill the law and the prophets, namely what God requires of us — loving God with above all things and loving our neighbor as ourselves. The Holy Spirit is every ready to transform our lives in Jesus' way of love. Do you thirst for holiness and for the fire of God's love?

### **Friday, March 6 ~ First Week in the Season of Lent**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:20-26** Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven. "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment. But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, *Raqa*, will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny."

**Meditation:** Do you allow sin or anger to master your life? Maybe at first glance you say "no, of course not." But take a deep look, an honest look at yourself, at your life, at how you live. The first human to hate his brother was Cain. God warned Cain: 'Why are you angry? ...Sin in couching at the door; it's

desire is for you, but you must master it (Genesis 4:6-7). Sin doesn't just happen; it first grows as a seed in one's heart. Unless it is mastered, by God's grace, it grows like a weed and chokes the fruitful vine. Jesus addressed the issue of keeping the commandments with his disciples. The scribes and Pharisees equated righteousness with satisfying the demands of the law. Jesus showed them how short they had come. Jesus points to the heart as the seat of desire and choice. Unless forbidden and evil desires are eradicated, the heart will be corrupted. Jesus points to forbidden anger with one's brother. This is a selfish anger that broods and is long-lived, that nurses a grudge and keeps wrath warm, and that refuses to die. Anger in the heart as well as anger in speech or action are equally forbidden. What is the antidote to anger and rage? Mercy, kindness, and forbearance spring from a heart full of love and forgiveness. God has forgiven us and he calls us to extend mercy and forgiveness towards those who cause us harm and grief. In the cross of Jesus we see the supreme example of love and the power for overcoming evil. Only God's love and grace can set our hearts and minds free from the tyranny of wounded pride and spiteful revenge. Do you harbor any anger towards another person? And are you quick to be reconciled when a rupture has been caused in your relationships? Ask God to set you free and to fill your heart and mind with his love and truth.

**Prayer:** Grant that your faithful, O Lord, we pray, may be so conformed to the paschal observances, that the bodily discipline now solemnly begun may bear fruit in the souls of all. 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:** Saint Eusebius, a Father of the Church, offered the following prayer as instruction for his fellow Christians: "May I be no man's enemy, and may I be the friend of that which is eternal and abides. May I never quarrel with those nearest me: and if I do, may I be reconciled quickly. May I love, seek, and attain only that which is good. May I wish for all men's happiness and envy none. May I never rejoice in the ill-fortune of one who has wronged me. When I have done or said what is wrong, may I never wait for the rebuke of others, but always rebuke myself until I make amends. May I win no victory that harms either me or my opponent. May I reconcile friends who are angry with one another. May I never fail a friend who is in danger. When visiting those in grief may I be able by gentle and healing words to soften their pain. May I respect myself. May I always keep tame that which rages within me. May I accustom myself to be gentle, and never be angry with people because of circumstances. May I never discuss who is wicked and what wicked things he has done, but know good men and follow in their footsteps." Do you seek to live peaceably and charitably with all people? Step-by-step, we turn away from sin and selfishness, and turn back to Christ. Begin these steps now, during Lent.

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Daily meditations and contemplations adapted from the Irish Jesuits' *Sacred Space* web page and *Biblical Medications for Lent* by Rev. Carroll Stuhlmüller, C.P.; prayers are from *The Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing, 2011; information about saints, solemnities, feasts and memorials courtesy of the Catholic Culture web site.

frlumpe:2020



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

**Saint Joseph and Lent:** Joseph was a great man, but where would he be without his family, without Jesus and Mary? I doubt he would make many appearances in 21st-century blog posts—most 1st-century Jewish carpenters don't. Joseph's holiness came through Jesus and Mary, by serving them and receiving from them. Similarly, God draws us to Himself through those around us. We do not become saints as isolated individuals, but as members of a family or community. "With their parents leading the way by example and family prayer, children and indeed everyone gathered around the family hearth will find a readier path to human maturity, salvation and holiness" (*Gaudium et spes*, 48). Lent is a good opportunity to examine our closest relationships. Is there a need to forgive? Is there love that needs rekindling? Is there gratitude missing? These are excellent ways of giving alms. (*Courtesy of the Catholic Exchange*)