

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)

“There is nothing more dangerous to the spiritual life than to wish to rule ourselves after our own way of thinking.” ~SAINT PHILIP NERI

**Monday, May 25 ~ Seventh Week in the Season of Easter
~ Memorial Day ~**

Holy Gospel: John 16:29-33 The disciples said to Jesus, “Now you are talking plainly, and not in any figure of speech. Now we realize that you know everything and that you do not need to have anyone question you. Because of this we believe that you came from God.” Jesus answered them, “Do you believe now? Behold, the hour is coming and has arrived when each of you will be scattered to his own home and you will leave me alone. But I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.”

Meditation: Notice how Jesus warned his disciples that their faith would be put to the test and that they would fail. Jesus spoke plainly about the tragedy of betrayal and the triumph of the cross. Jesus knew the hearts of his disciples better than they knew. He knew they would desert him in his hour of trial. Such knowledge could have easily led to bitterness and rejection. Jesus met the injury of betrayal and disloyalty with supreme love and trust in his disciples. He loved his disciples to the very end even when they left him alone to die on the cross. He knew that the cross would not bring defeat but victory over sin and death. Jesus speaks the same word to us today. “My love for you is unconditional and I will never abandon you.” While we cannot avoid all pain and suffering in this life, Jesus, nonetheless assures us that he will guide us safely through any difficulty or trial we may have to undergo for his sake. Jesus calls each of us to take courage, because he has overcome the world. The Holy Spirit gives us a living hope in the power of the resurrection and a confident trust in God’s abiding presence. Nothing can overcome this faith and hope in Christ’s victory – no trial, suffering, temptation, or testing. The Holy Spirit gives us the strength and courage we need to overcome adversity and to persevere in faith.

Memorial Day Prayer: God of power and mercy, you destroy war and put down earthly pride. Banish violence from our midst and wipe away our tears, that we may all deserve to be called your sons and daughters. Keep in your mercy those men and women who have died in the cause of freedom and bring them safely into your kingdom of justice and peace. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Contemplation: How did Jesus convince his disciples that he was the Son of God? Jesus could read their hearts like an open book. He answered their questions before they could even speak them out. And he showed them the glory of God. For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his “beloved Son,” in whom the Father is “well pleased.” We can believe in Jesus and in the words he speaks because he is himself God, the Word made flesh. Since he “has seen the Father,” and is “one with the Father,” Jesus is the only one who knows the Father as he truly is and can reveal him to us. Our faith is “certain” because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. Faith is already the beginning of eternal life. Saint Basil the Great says: “When we contemplate the blessings of faith even now, as if gazing at a reflection in a mirror, it is as if we already possessed the wonderful things which our faith assures us we shall enjoy one day.”

Memorial Day: A Lesson in Service and Sacrifice (by Tom McGrath, Loyola Press): What we remember—and honor—on Memorial Day is heroic sacrifice. We acknowledge those who nobly gave of themselves, even unto death, for a purpose they believed was greater than themselves. Since the days just following the end of the Civil War, Americans have gathered in late May to honor those who died in military service to their country. In the spirit of the day, we can also recall, honor, and pray for all those we know who have lived lives of service and sacrifice for the good of others.

One definition of *sacrifice* is “the destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else.” Though suffering is always a part of sacrifice to some extent, seeking suffering for its own sake is *not* sacrifice. Sacrifice implies giving up one good for a higher good. For example, a child gives up a day of play to visit an ailing grandparent, or a parent sacrifices watching a favorite television program to help a child who is struggling with homework. Life in the family is full of opportunities for service and sacrifice.

What counts in this definition is the phrase “for the sake of something else.” Is that “something else” worthy of the sacrifice we make? True sacrifice is always at the service of life. We learn this from Jesus, who made the ultimate sacrifice and remained faithful through his Passion, death, and Resurrection. Jesus’ greater purpose for this sacrifice was our well-being—that we might have life and have it abundantly.

This Memorial Day, as we remember all who have served and sacrificed on our behalf, let us not forget what Jesus was willing to give up for us—and the lessons we can learn from that perfect example of sacrifice.

Tuesday, May 26 ~ Seventh Week in the Season of Easter Saint Philip Neri, Priest

Holy Gospel: John 17:1-11a Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your son, so that your son may glorify you, just as you gave him authority over all people, so that your son may give eternal life to all you gave him. Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ. I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do. Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began. I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you gave me is from you, because the words you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and truly understood that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours, and everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified in them. And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming to you.”

Meditation: What is this “glory” of which Jesus speaks in this scripture passage? It is the cross which Jesus speaks of here. How does the cross reveal his glory? In the cross God reveals the breadth of his great love for sinners and the power of redemption which cancels the debt of sin and reverses the curse of our condemnation. Jesus gave his Father the supreme honor and glory through his obedience and willingness to go to the cross. In times of defense the greatest honor belongs not to those who fought and survived but to those who gave the supreme sacrifice of their own lives for their fellow citizens. Jesus speaks of the Father bringing glory to the Son through the great mystery of the Incarnation and Cross of Christ. God the Father gave us his only begotten Son for our redemption and deliverance from slavery to sin and death. There is no greater proof of God's love for each and every person on the face of the earth than the Cross of Jesus Christ. In the cross we see a new way of love – a love that is unconditional, sacrificial and generous beyond comprehension.

Prayer: Grant, we pray, almighty and merciful God, that the Holy Spirit, coming near and dwelling graciously within us, may make of us a perfect temple of his glory. 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 ~ Saint Philip Neri: Father, you continually raise up your faithful to the glory of holiness. In your love kindle in us the fire of the Holy Spirit who so filled the heart of Philip Neri. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Jesus tells his disciples that they can know the only true God. Knowledge of God is not simply limited to knowing something about God, but we can come to know God personally. The essence of Christianity, and what makes it distinct from Judaism and other religions, is the knowledge of God as our Father. Jesus makes it possible for each of us to personally know God as our Father. To see Jesus is to see what God is like. In Jesus we see the perfect love of God – a God who cares intensely and who yearns over men and women, loving them to the point of laying down his life for them upon the Cross. Jesus is the revelation of God – a God who loves us completely, unconditionally and perfectly. Do you seek unity of heart, mind and will with God and unity of love and peace with your neighbor?

Wednesday, May 27 ~ Seventh Week in the Season of Easter Saint Augustine of Canterbury, Bishop

Holy Gospel: John 17:11b-19 Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed, saying: "Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one. When I was with them I protected them in your name that you gave me, and I guarded them, and none of them was lost except the son of destruction, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you. I speak this in the world so that they may share my joy completely. I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the Evil One. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth."

Meditation: Jesus prayed that his disciples would be sanctified and consecrated in God's truth and holiness. The scriptural word for consecration comes from the same Hebrew word which means "holy" or "set apart for God." This word also means to be "equipped with the qualities of mind and heart and character for such a task or service." Just as Jesus was called by the Father to serve in holiness and truth, so we, too, are called and equipped for the task of serving God in the world as his ambassadors. God's truth frees us from ignorance and the deception of sin. It reveals to us God's goodness, love, and wisdom. And it gives us a thirst for God's holiness. The Holy Spirit is the source and giver of all holiness. As we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, he transforms us by his purifying fire and changes us in the likeness of Christ. Is your life consecrated to God?

Prayer: Graciously grant to your Church, O merciful God, that, gathered by the Holy Spirit, she may be devoted to you with all her heart and united in purity of intent. 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 ~ Saint Augustine of Canterbury: O God, who by the preaching of the Bishop Saint Augustine of Canterbury led the English peoples to the Gospel, grant, we pray, that the fruits of his labors may remain ever abundant in your Church. 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: Have you ever given time, thought and prayer to know what your purpose and mission in life is? Jesus' aim and mission was to glorify his heavenly Father. All he said and did gave glory to his Father. On the eve of his sacrifice and in the presence of his disciples, Jesus made his high priestly prayer: "Holy Father, keep them in your name that they may be one as we are one". Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples and for all who would believe in him. Jesus' prayer for his people is that we be united with God the Father in his Son and through his Holy Spirit and be joined together, in unity with all who are members of Christ's body. Jesus saw glory in the cross rather than shame. Obedience to his Father's will was his glory. Jesus kept his Father's word even when tempted to forgo the cross. His strength was not in himself but in his Father who kept him. We, too, must take up our cross and follow the Lord Jesus wherever and whenever he may call us.

Thursday, May 28 ~ Seventh Week in the Season of Easter

Holy Gospel: John 17:20-26 Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed saying: "I pray not only for these, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them."

Meditation: The unity of Jesus and his Father is a unity of love and obedience, and a unity of personal relationship. Because Jesus loves us and united us through the Sacrament of Baptism we are called to live in a unity of love. Through the Eucharist, we are united to Christ in the greatest gift to us – Christ's Body and Blood. Through his teachings, we follow him wherever he leads us as his disciples. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we demonstrate our heartfelt desire to reunite ourselves with him,

recognizing our sinfulness, our sorrow for having sinned, and our pledge not to sin again. Jesus' prayer on the eve of his sacrifice shows the great love and trust he has in his beloved disciples. He knows they would abandon him in his hour of trial, yet he entrusted to them the great task of spreading his name throughout the world and to the end of the ages. The Lord entrust us with the same mission...to make him known and loved by all. Jesus died and rose again that all might be one as he and the Father are one.

Prayer: May your Spirit, O Lord, we pray, imbue us powerfully with spiritual gifts, that he may give us a mind pleasing to you and graciously conform us 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. Amen.

Contemplation: Look around at the people in the pews who are with you in Church. Look around at the people in your office, your school, your home, your neighborhood. The distinctive mark of Jesus' disciples is their love for God and their desire to do his will, and their love for one another. Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper concludes with the prayer for all men and women who will come after him and follow him as his disciples. In a special way Jesus prays here for us that as members of his body we would be one as he and his Father – God the father – are one.

Friday, May 29 ~ Seventh Week in the Season of Easter Saint Paul VI, Pope

Holy Gospel: John 21:15-19 After Jesus had revealed himself to his disciples and eaten breakfast with them, he said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to Simon Peter a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

Meditation: Jesus calls us, even in our weakness and sin, to love him above all else. Saint Augustine in his book *Confessions* wrote: "Late have I loved you, O Beauty so ancient and so new. Late have I loved you! ...You shone your Self upon me to drive away my blindness. You breathed your fragrance upon me... and in astonishment I drew my breath...now I pant for you! I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst for you. You touched me! - and I burn to live within your peace." Nothing but our stubborn human pride, our sinfulness, and our willfulness can keep us from the love of God. God's love is a free gift, unmerited and beyond payment. We can never outmatch God in love. He loved us first; we must reciprocate with total love for Him by following His commands, and the teachings of His Son and His Catholic Church.

Prayer: O God, who by the glorification of your Christ and the light of the Holy Spirit have unlocked for us the gates of eternity, grant, we pray, that, partaking of so great a gift, our devotion may grow deeper and our faith be strengthened. 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 ~ Saint Paul VI: O God, who entrusted your Church to the leadership of Pope Saint Paul VI, a courageous apostle of your Son's Gospel, grant that, illuminated by his teachings, we may work with you to expand the civilization of 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: Do you want the fire of God's love to burn in your heart? John the Evangelist tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:16). His love is unconditional, without limit, and everlasting. It's the beginning and the end; and it's the essence of Christianity. It draws us to the heart of God and it compels us to give to him our full allegiance and our very lives. Saint Paul the Apostle tells us that God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given us (ref. Romans 5:5). As so we must ask ourselves: Do I love God with all my mind, all my heart, and all my soul? If not, then ask yourself: what is holding me back?

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