

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)

“It is perfectly true that we die with Him in baptism and rise from the dead: but this is only the beginning of a series of deaths and resurrections. We are not ‘converted’ only once in our life but many times, and this endless series of large and small ‘conversions,’ inner revolutions, leads finally to our transformation in Christ.”

EXCERPTED FROM “LIFE AND HOLINESS” BY FR. THOMAS MERTON, OCSO

Monday, January 25 ~ Third Week in Ordinary Time Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle

Holy Gospel: Mark 16:15-18 Jesus appeared to the Eleven and said to them: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Meditation: Jesus' departure and ascension into heaven was both an end and a beginning for his disciples. While it was the end of Jesus' physical presence with his beloved disciples, it marked the beginning of Jesus' presence with them in a new way. Jesus promised that he would be with them always to the end of time. Now as the glorified and risen Lord and Savior, ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, Jesus promised to send them the Holy Spirit who would anoint them with power on the Feast of Pentecost, just as Jesus was anointed for his ministry at the River Jordan. When the Lord Jesus departed physically from the apostles, they were not left in sorrow or grief. Instead, they were filled with joy and with great anticipation for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' last words to his apostles point to his saving mission and to their mission to be witnesses of his saving death and his glorious resurrection and to proclaim the good news of salvation to all the world. Their task is to proclaim the good news of salvation, not only to the people of Israel, but to all the nations. God's love and gift of salvation is not just for a few, or for a nation, but it is for the whole world – for all who will accept it. The gospel is the power of God, the power to forgive sins, to heal, to deliver from evil and oppression, and to restore life. Do you believe in the power of the gospel?

Prayer: O God, who taught the whole world through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Paul, draw us, we pray, nearer to you through the example of him whose conversion we celebrate today, and so make us witnesses to your truth in the world. 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.

A Prayer for Conversion: O Father, in the name of Your Son Jesus, and in the power and authority of the Holy Spirit, I ask that You fill me with the knowledge of Your will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Enlighten me, dear Lord! Teach me to live in a manner that is worthy of You, so as to be fully pleasing to You, full of good works bearing good fruits and ever growing in knowledge of You. Strengthen me, a lost lamb, dear Lord, with every power of Your Holy Spirit, in accordance with Your might, for all endurance and patience, with joy, giving thanks to You O Father! Make me fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in the Light. Deliver me from the power of darkness and transfer me into the kingdom of Your Beloved Son, Jesus, in whom is redemption and the forgiveness of sins. Amen.

Contemplation: This is the great commission which the risen Christ gives to the whole church. All believers have been given a share in this task – to be heralds of the good news and ambassadors for Jesus Christ, the only savior of the world. We have not been left alone in this task, for the risen Lord works in and through us by the power of his Holy Spirit. Today we witness a new Pentecost as the Lord pours out his Holy Spirit upon his people to renew and strengthen the body of Christ and to equip it for

effective ministry and mission world-wide. Do you witness to others the joy of the gospel and the hope of the resurrection?

Tuesday, January 26 ~ Third Week in Ordinary Time **Saints Timothy and Titus, Bishops**

Holy Gospel: Mark 3:31-35 The mother of Jesus and his brothers arrived at the house. Standing outside, they sent word to Jesus and called him. A crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers and your sisters are outside asking for you." But he said to them in reply, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Meditation: Jesus is God's love incarnate – God's love made visible in human flesh (1 John 4:9-10). That is why Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep and the shepherd who seeks out the sheep who have strayed and lost their way. God is like the father who yearns for his prodigal son to return home and then throws a great party for his son when he has a change of heart and comes back (Luke 15:11-32). Jesus offered up his life on the cross for our sake, so that we could be forgiven and restored to unity and friendship with God. It is through Jesus that we become the adopted children of God – his own sons and daughters. That is why Jesus told his disciples that they would have many new friends and family relationships in his kingdom. Whoever does the will of God is a friend of God and a member of his family – his sons and daughters who have been ransomed by the precious blood of Christ.

Prayer: O God, who adorned Saints Timothy and Titus with apostolic virtues, grant through the intercession of them both, that, living justly and devoutly in this present age, we may merit to reach our heavenly homeland. 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: One of the early martyrs of the Church, Lucian of Antioch, once said: "a Christian's only relatives are the saints" – namely those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and adopted as sons and daughters of God. Those who have been baptized into Jesus Christ and who live as his disciples enter into a new family, a family of "saints" here on earth and in heaven. Jesus changes the order of relationships and shows that true kinship is not just a matter of flesh and blood. Our adoption as sons and daughters of God transforms all of our relationships and requires a new order of loyalty to God first and to his kingdom of righteousness and peace. Do you want to grow in love and friendship? Allow God's Holy Spirit to transform your heart, mind, and will to enable you to love freely and generously as he loves.

Wednesday, January 27 ~ Third Week in Ordinary Time **Saint Angela Merici, Virgin**

Holy Gospel: Mark 4:1-20 On another occasion, Jesus began to teach by the sea. A very large crowd gathered around him so that he got into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the whole crowd was beside the sea on land. And he taught them at length in parables, and in the course of his instruction he said to them, "Hear this! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep. And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no grain. And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." He added, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear." And when he was alone, those present along with the Twelve questioned him about the parables. He answered them, "The mystery of the Kingdom of God has been granted to you. But to those outside everything comes in parables, so that they may look and see but not perceive, and hear and listen but not understand, in order that they may not be converted and be forgiven." Jesus said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand any of the parables? The sower sows the word. These are the ones on the path where the word is sown. As soon as they hear, Satan comes at once and takes away the word sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground who, when they hear the word, receive it at once with joy. But they have no roots; they last only for a time. Then when tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Those sown among thorns are another sort. They are the people who hear the word, but worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the word, and it bears no fruit. But those sown on rich soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

Meditation: Jesus' parable of the sower is aimed at the hearers of his word. There are different ways of accepting God's word and they produce different kinds of fruit accordingly. There is the prejudiced hearer who has a shut mind. Such a person is unteachable and blind to what he or she doesn't want to hear, usually because they think they know better. Then there is the shallow hearer. He or she fails to think things out or think them through; they lack depth. They may initially respond with an emotional reaction, but when it wears off their mind wanders to something else. Another type of hearer is the person who has many interests or cares, but who lacks the ability to hear or comprehend what is truly important. Such a person is too busy to pray or too preoccupied to study and meditate on God's word. Then there is the one whose mind is open. Such a person is at all times willing to listen, to hear with clarity, and to learn. He or she is never too proud or too busy to learn, or one that thinks this doesn't apply to them. They listen in order to understand and to become a better disciple of Christ.

Prayer: May the Virgin Saint Angela never fail to commend us to your compassion, O Lord, we pray, that, following the lessons of her charity and prudence, and express it in what we do. 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: God gives grace to those who hunger for his word, his teachings, his truth that they may understand his will and have the strength to live according to it. Faith in his word is the way to wisdom, and to ponder God's divine plan is to grow in the truth, the way, and the life of Christ. Do you hunger for his word?

Thursday, January 28 ~ Third Week in Ordinary Time Saint Thomas Aquinas, Priest and Doctor of the Church

Holy Gospel: Mark 4:21-25 Jesus said to his disciples, "Is a lamp brought in to be placed under a bushel basket or under a bed, and not to be placed on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden except to be made visible; nothing is secret except to come to light. Anyone who has ears to hear ought to hear." He also told them, "Take care what you hear. The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you, and still more will be given to you. To the one who has, more will be given; from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

Meditation: Lamps in the ancient world served a vital function, much like they do today. They enable people to see and work in the dark and to avoid stumbling. The Jews also understood "light" as an expression of the inner beauty, truth, and goodness of God. In his light we see light (Psalm 36:9). His word is a lamp that guides our steps (Psalm 119:105). God's grace not only illumines the darkness in our lives, but it also fills us with spiritual light, joy, and peace. Jesus used the image of a lamp to describe how his disciples are to live in the light of his truth and love. Just as natural light illumines the darkness and enables one to see visually, so the light of Christ shines in the hearts of believers and enables us to see the heavenly reality of God's kingdom. In fact, our mission is to be light-bearers of Christ so that others may see the truth of the gospel and be freed from the blindness of sin and deception.

Prayer: O God, who made Saint Thomas Aquinas outstanding in his zeal for holiness and his study of sacred doctrine, grant us, we pray, that we may understand what he taught and imitate what he accomplished. 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 remarks that nothing can remain hidden or secret. We can try to hide things from others, from ourselves, and from God. How tempting to shut our eyes from the consequences of our sinful ways and bad habits, even when we know what those consequences are. And how tempting to hide them from others and even from God. But, nonetheless, everything is known to God who sees all, who hears all, who knows all. There is great freedom and joy for those who live in God's light and who seek this truth. Those who listen to God and heed his voice will receive more from him. Do you know the joy and freedom of living in God's light, and letting his light illuminate what is right and good and true?

Friday, January 29 ~ Third Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 4:26-34 Jesus said to the crowds: "This is how it is with the Kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come." He said, "To what shall we compare the Kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it? It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But

once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade." With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it. Without parables he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained everything in private.

Meditation: What can mustard seeds teach us about the kingdom of God? The tiny mustard seed literally grew to be a tree which attracted numerous birds because they loved the little black mustard seed it produced. God's kingdom works in a similar fashion. It starts from the smallest beginnings in the hearts of men and women who are receptive to God's word. And it works unseen and causes a transformation from within. Just as a seed has no power to change itself until it is planted in the ground, so we cannot change our lives to be like God until God gives us the power of his Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, direct our actions according to your good pleasure, that in the name of your beloved Son we may abound in good works. 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: The Lord of the Universe is ever ready to transform us by the power of his Spirit. Are you ready to let God change you by his grace and power? The kingdom of God produces a transformation in those who receive the new life which Jesus Christ offers. When we yield to Jesus Christ, our lives are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Paul the Apostle says, "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). Do you believe in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit?

Saturday, January 30 ~ Third Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 4:35-41 On that day, as evening drew on, Jesus said to his disciples: "Let us cross to the other side." Leaving the crowd, they took Jesus with them in the boat just as he was. And other boats were with him. A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up. Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!" The wind ceased and there was great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?" They were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"

Meditation: Jesus' sleeping presence on the storm-tossed sea is revealing of the sleeping faith of his disciples. They feared for their lives even though their Lord and Savior was right there with them in the boat. They were asleep to Christ while he was present to them in their hour of need. Despite our fears and anxieties, we must remember that the Jesus is ever present to us. Whenever we encounter trouble, the Lord is there with the same reassuring message: "It is I, do not be afraid."

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, direct our actions according to your good pleasure, that in the name of your beloved Son we may abound in good works. 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: A simple yet profound question to ask yourself: Do you recognize the Lord's presence with you, especially when you meet the storms in life of adversity, sorrow, fear, challenge, anxiety and temptation? Where is your faith in Christ? What are the characteristics of faith and how can we grow in it? Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to us. Believing is only possible by grace and the help of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and who opens the eyes of the mind to understand and accept the truth which God has revealed to us. Faith enables us to relate to God rightly and confidently, with trust and reliance, by believing and adhering to his word, because he is utterly reliable and trustworthy. If we want to live, grow, and persevere in faith, then it must be nourished with the word of God. Fear does not need to cripple us from taking right action or rob us of our trust and reliance on God. Courage working with faith enables us to embrace God's word of truth and love with confidence and to act on it with firm hope in God's promises. The love of God strengthens us in our faith and trust in him and enables us to act with justice and kindness towards our neighbor even in the face of opposition or harm.

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.

frlumpe:2021

