

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)

The month of November is dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

Pray daily for those who have died, just as you hope people will pray for you following your death.

“I am where God wills me to be, and so I have found rest and security. His wisdom governs me, His power defends me, His grace sanctifies me, His mercy encompasses me, His joy sustains me and all will go well with me.”

~PRAYER OF SAINT ROSE PHILIPPINE DUCHESNE

Monday, November 15 ~ Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time

Saint Albert the Great, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Holy Gospel: Luke 18:35-43 As Jesus approached Jericho a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging, and hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what was happening. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” He shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!” The people walking in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent, but he kept calling out all the more, “Son of David, have pity on me!” Then Jesus stopped and ordered that he be brought to him; and when he came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He replied, “Lord, please let me see.” Jesus told him, “Have sight; your faith has saved you.” He immediately received his sight and followed him, giving glory to God. When they saw this, all the people gave praise to God.

Meditation: It took a certain amount of courage and certainly a strong amount of persistence for Bartimaeus to get the attention of Jesus over the noisy throng who crowded around Jesus as he made his way out of town. Why was the crowd annoyed with the blind man's persistent shouts? He was disturbing their peace and interrupting their conversation with Jesus. It was common for a rabbi to teach as he walked with others. Jesus was on his way to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem and a band of pilgrims followed him. When the crowd tried to silence the blind man he overpowered them with his loud emotional outburst and thus caught the attention of Jesus. This incident reveals something important about how God interacts with us. The blind man was determined to get Jesus' attention and he was persistent in the face of opposition of the crowd. Jesus could have ignored or scolded him because he was interrupting his talk and disturbing his audience. Jesus showed that action was more important than talking. This man was in desperate need and Jesus was ready not only to empathize with his suffering but to relieve it as well. Looking at the people around us – those whom we know, those who are total strangers – do we hear the pleas of those in need? Do we do something to help them, and do so out of love?

Prayer: O God, who made the Bishop Saint Albert great by his joining of human wisdom to divine faith, grant, we pray, that we may so adhere to the truths he taught, that through progress in learning we may come to a deeper knowledge and love of you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Bartimaeus was not only grateful for the gift of faith and the gift of physical sight, but for the opportunity to now follow Jesus as one of his disciples. Luke tells us that he immediately followed Jesus and gave glory to God. The crowd also gave praise to God when they saw this double miracle of spiritual and physical vision. Saint Cyril of Alexandria, a Father of the Church, comments on this double vision: “Now that he was delivered from his blindness, did he neglect the duty of loving Christ? He certainly did not. It says, ‘He followed him, offering him glory like to God.’ He was set free from double blindness. Not only did he escape from the blindness of the body but also from that of the mind and heart. He would not have glorified him as God, had he not possessed spiritual vision. He became the means of others giving Christ glory, for it says that all the people gave glory to God.” (Commentary on Luke, Homily 126)

Tuesday, November 16 ~ Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time Saint Margaret of Scotland; Saint Gertrude, Virgin

Holy Gospel: Luke 19:1-10 At that time Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

Meditation: We would be well-served to meditate on today's Gospel with the help of a homily excerpt of Saint Augustine of Hippo: "Zacchaeus climbed away from the crowd and saw Jesus without the crowd getting in his way. The crowd laughs at the lowly, to people walking the way of humility, who leave the wrongs they suffer in God's hands and do not insist on getting back at their enemies. The crowd laughs at the lowly and says, 'You helpless, miserable clod, you cannot even stick up for yourself and get back what is your own.' The crowd gets in the way and prevents Jesus from being seen. The crowd boasts and crows when it is able to get back what it owns. It blocks the sight of the one who said as he hung on the cross, 'Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing... He ignored the crowd that was getting in his way. He instead climbed a sycamore tree, a tree of 'silly fruit.' As the apostle says, 'We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block indeed to the Jews, [now notice the sycamore] but folly to the Gentiles.' Finally, the wise people of this world laugh at us about the cross of Christ and say, 'What sort of minds do you people have, who worship a crucified God?' What sort of minds do we have? They are certainly not your kind of mind. 'The wisdom of this world is folly with God.' No, we do not have your kind of mind. You call our minds foolish. Say what you like, but for our part, let us climb the sycamore tree and see Jesus. The reason you cannot see Jesus is that you are ashamed to climb the sycamore tree. Let Zacchaeus grasp the sycamore tree, and let the humble person climb the cross. That is little enough, merely to climb it. We must not be ashamed of the cross of Christ, but we must fix it on our foreheads, where the seat of shame is. Above where all our blushes show is the place we must firmly fix that for which we should never blush. As for you, I rather think you make fun of the sycamore, and yet that is what has enabled me to see Jesus. You make fun of the sycamore, because you are just a person, but 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men.'" [Sermon 174.3.]

Prayer ~ Saint Margaret of Scotland: O God, who made Saint Margaret of Scotland wonderful in her outstanding charity towards the poor, grant that through her intercession and example we may reflect among all humanity the image of your divine goodness. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Prayer ~ Saint Gertrude: O God, who prepared a delightful dwelling for yourself in the heart of the Virgin Saint Gertrude, graciously bring light, through her intercession, to the darkness of our hearts, that we may joyfully experience you present and at work within us. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Contemplation: Zacchaeus needed God's merciful love and forgiveness. In his encounter with Jesus he found more than he imagined possible. He shows the depth of his repentance by deciding to give half of his goods to the poor and to use the other half for making restitution for fraud. Zacchaeus' testimony included more than words. His change of heart resulted in a change of life, a change that the whole community could experience as genuine.

Wednesday, November 17 ~ Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Religious

Holy Gospel: Luke 19:11-28 While people were listening to Jesus speak, he proceeded to tell a parable because he was near Jerusalem and they thought that the Kingdom of God would appear there immediately. So he said, "A nobleman went off to a distant country to obtain the kingship for himself and then to return. He called ten of his servants and gave them ten gold coins and told them, 'Engage in trade with these until I return.' His fellow citizens, however, despised him and sent a delegation after him to announce, 'We do not want this man to be our king.' But when he returned after obtaining the kingship,

he had the servants called, to whom he had given the money, to learn what they had gained by trading. The first came forward and said, 'Sir, your gold coin has earned ten additional ones.' He replied, 'Well done, good servant! You have been faithful in this very small matter; take charge of ten cities.' Then the second came and reported, 'Your gold coin, sir, has earned five more.' And to this servant too he said, 'You, take charge of five cities.' Then the other servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your gold coin; I kept it stored away in a handkerchief, for I was afraid of you, because you are a demanding man; you take up what you did not lay down and you harvest what you did not plant.' He said to him, 'With your own words I shall condemn you, you wicked servant. You knew I was a demanding man, taking up what I did not lay down and harvesting what I did not plant; why did you not put my money in a bank? Then on my return I would have collected it with interest.' And to those standing by he said, 'Take the gold coin from him and give it to the servant who has ten.' But they said to him, 'Sir, he has ten gold coins.' He replied, 'I tell you, to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. Now as for those enemies of mine who did not want me as their king, bring them here and slay them before me.'" After he had said this, he proceeded on his journey up to Jerusalem.

Meditation: The parable in today's Gospel reveals something important about how God works his plan and purpose with the human race. The parable speaks first of the king's trust in his subjects. While he goes away he leaves them with his money to use as they think best. While there were no strings attached, this was obviously a test to see if the Master's workers would be industrious and reliable in their use of the money entrusted to them. The master rewards those who are industrious and faithful and he punishes those who sit by idly and who do nothing with his money. The essence of the parable seems to lie in the servants' conception of responsibility. Each servant entrusted with the master's money was faithful up to a certain point. The servant who buried the master's money was irresponsible. One can bury seeds in the ground and expect them to become productive because they obey natural laws. Coins, however, do not obey natural laws. They obey economic laws and become productive in circulation. The master expected his servants to be productive in the use of his money. So what do coins and the laws of economics have to do with the kingdom of God? The Lord entrusts the subjects of his kingdom with gifts and graces and he gives his subjects the freedom to use them as they think best. With each gift and talent, God gives sufficient means (grace and wisdom) for using them in a fitting way. As the parable of the talents shows, God abhors indifference and an attitude that says it's not worth trying. God honors those who use their talents and gifts for doing good. Those who are faithful with even a little are entrusted with more! But those who neglect or squander what God has entrusted to them will lose what they have.

Prayer: O God, by whose gift Saint Elizabeth of Hungary recognized and revered Christ in the poor, grant, through her intercession, that we may serve with unflinching charity the needy and those afflicted. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: There is an important lesson here for us. No one can stand still for long in the authentic life as a disciple of Christ, a follower of Jesus, a Christian. We either get more or we lose what we have. We either advance towards God or we slip back. Do you seek to serve God with the gifts, talents, and graces he has given to you? Or might you be considered a spiritual couch potato?

Thursday, November 18 ~ Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time
Dedication of the Churches of Saint Peter and Saint Paul (Rome);
Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne, Virgin

Holy Gospel: Luke 19:41-44 As Jesus drew near Jerusalem, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If this day you only knew what makes for peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. For the days are coming upon you when your enemies will raise a palisade against you; they will encircle you and hem you in on all sides. They will smash you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another within you because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

Meditation: When Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the multitude of homes surrounding the holy temple, he wept over it because its inhabitants did not "know the things that make for peace" (Luke 19:42). As he poured out his heart to the Father in heaven, Jesus shed tears of sorrow, grief, and mourning for his people. He knew that he would soon pour out his blood for the people of Jerusalem and for the whole world as well. Why does Jesus weep and lament over City of Jerusalem? Throughout its history, many of the rulers and inhabitants had rejected the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord because of their pride and unbelief. Now they refuse to listen to Jesus who comes as their Messiah - whom God has anointed to be their Savior and Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Prayer ~ Dedication of the Basilica Churches of Saint Peter and Saint Paul: Defend your Church, O Lord, by the protection of the holy Apostles, that, as she received from them the beginnings of her knowledge of things divine, so through them she may receive, even to the end of the world, an increase in heavenly grace. 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 Rose Philippine Duchesne: Almighty God, who filled the heart of Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne with charity and missionary zeal, and gave her the desire to make you known among all peoples, grant us to follow her way and fill us with that same love and zeal to extend your Kingdom to the ends of the earth. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: When God visits his people he comes to establish peace and justice by rooting out our enemies - the *world* (in opposition to God), the *flesh* (our sinful cravings and inordinate desires), and the *devil* (who is Satan the father of lies) who enslave us to fear and pride, rebellion and hatred, envy and covetousness, strife and violence, and every form of evil and wrong-doing. That is why God both judges and purifies his people - to lead us from our sinful ways to his way of justice, peace, love, and holiness. God actively works among his people to teach us his ways and to save us from the destruction of our own pride and sin and from Satan's snares and lies. Are God's judgments unjust or unloving? Scripture tells us that "when God's judgments are revealed in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:9). To pronounce judgment on sin is much less harsh than what will happen if those who sin are not warned to repent. The Lord in his mercy gives us grace and time to turn away from sin, but that time is right now. If we delay, even for a moment, we may discover that grace has passed us by and our time is up. Why would we want to delay any opportunity to confess our sins, seeks God's unbounded love, mercy and forgiveness, and have our baptismal graces renewed?

Friday, November 19 ~ Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 19:45-48 Jesus entered the temple area and proceeded to drive out those who were selling things, saying to them, "It is written, *My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.*" And every day he was teaching in the temple area. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people, meanwhile, were seeking to put him to death, but they could find no way to accomplish their purpose because all the people were hanging on his words.

Meditation: This is the only incident in the Gospels where we see Jesus using physical force. Jesus went to Jerusalem, knowing he would meet certain death on the cross, but victory as well for our sake. His act of judgment in the temple is meant to be a prophetic sign and warning to the people that God takes our worship very seriously. In this incident we see Jesus' startling and swift action in cleansing the temple of those who were using it to exploit the worshipers of God. The money changers took advantage of the poor and forced them to pay many times more than was right - in the house of God no less! Their robbery of the poor was not only dishonoring to God but unjust toward their neighbor.

Prayer: Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: If we approach God's word with a humble attentive heart and with a willingness to be taught by the Lord, then we are in a good place to allow God's word to change and transform us in the likeness of Christ. The Lord wants to teach us his ways so that we may grow in holiness. The Lord both instructs and disciplines us in love to lead us from the error of our sinful ways to his truth and justice. "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness" (Hebrews 12:10). The Lord calls us to be a holy people who worship him with reverence and gratitude for his great mercy and kindness towards us. Do you allow God's word to transform you in his way of love and holiness?

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