

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)

“In all your deeds and words you should look upon this Jesus as your model. Do so whether you are walking or keeping silence, or speaking, whether you are alone or with others. He is perfect, and thus you will be not only irreprehensible, but praiseworthy.” +SAINT BONAVENTURE

**Monday, July 12 ~ Fifteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time
Saints Louis and Zélie Martin**

Holy Gospel: Matthew 10:34-11:1 Jesus said to his Apostles: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s enemies will be those of his household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple— amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.” When Jesus finished giving these commands to his Twelve disciples, he went away from that place to teach and to preach in their towns.

Meditation: Why does Jesus describe his mission and the coming of God's kingdom in terms of conflict, division, and war? Jesus came in peace to reconcile a broken and sinful humanity with an all-merciful and loving God. Jesus also came to wage war, to overthrow the powers and principalities arrayed against God and his kingdom. What are these powers? Jesus describes Satan as the ruler of this world whom he will cast out (John 12:31). The battle Jesus had in mind was not an earthly conflict between nations, but a spiritual warfare between the forces of Satan and the armies of heaven. The scriptures make clear that there are ultimately only two powers or kingdoms – God's kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. John contrasts these two kingdoms in the starkest of terms: We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

Prayer: May the prayer and integrity of Saints Louis and Zélie Martin, O Lord, we pray, obtain help for your faithful, that they may gain a share in the eternal inheritance of those whom they celebrate with devotion. 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.

Intercessory Prayer to Saints Louis and Zélie Martin: Saints Louis and Zélie Martin, after having had the desire for religious life, you heard the Lord's call to the vocation of marriage. You are the “parents without equal” of whom your daughter Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus speaks; the fortunate parents of Léonie, the Servant of God, Sister Françoise-Thérèse; of Marie, Pauline, and Céline, transplanted to Mount Carmel; and of the four children taken from your affection in their youth: Hélène, Joseph, Jean-Baptiste, and Mélanie-Thérèse. You gave all glory to God through your humble and patient work, your commitment to the poor, and your family life, where reigned the happiness of loving and being loved. You lived your daily life concretely through the joys and sorrows of your existence. You love us as your own children, with the heart of a father and the heart of a mother, because you are the friends of God. Listen to our prayer and our request (*mention your request at this point in the prayer*) and intercede for us with God the Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Contemplation: When Jesus spoke about division he likely had in mind the prophecy of Micah: a man's enemies are the men of his own household (Micah 7:6). The love of God compels us to choose who will be

first in our lives. To place any relationship or anything else above God is a form of idolatry. Jesus challenges his disciples to examine who they love first and foremost. A true disciple loves God above all else and is willing to forsake all for Jesus Christ. Jesus insists that his disciples give him the loyalty which is only due to God, a loyalty which is higher than spouse or kin. It is possible that family and friends can become our enemies, if the thought of them keeps us from doing what we know God wants us to do. True love for God compels us to express charity towards our neighbor who is created in the image and likeness of God. Jesus declared that any kindness shown and any help given to the people of Christ will not lose its reward. Jesus never refused to give to anyone in need who asked for his help. As his disciples we are called to be kind and generous as he is. Jesus sets before his disciples the one goal in life that is worth any sacrifice and that goal is the will of God which leads to everlasting life, peace, and joy with God.

About Saints Louis and Zélie Martin: was born in Bordeaux in 1823 and baptized Louis-Joseph-Aloys-Stanislaus. He grew up in Alençon and after school learned clock-making eventually opening his own watch-making and jewelry business on the rue du Pont-Neuf in Alençon. As a young man he wished to become a priest but it was not to be. Prayer was an important part of his life. He liked reading, fishing and walking in the countryside. His travels included his well-known pilgrimage to Rome in 1887 with his daughters Thérèse and Céline on the occasion of which Thérèse - still not fifteen years old - asked Pope Leo XIII for permission to enter Carmel. Zélie Guérin (christened Marie-Azélie) was born in 1831 near Alençon. She had a strong faith. She too wished to embrace the religious life and again it was not to be. Much is written of her great energy and capacity for work. She became a professional and talented maker of Alençon point lace and she also started her own business in Alençon. When Zélie was 26 years old she encountered Louis Martin on the Bridge of St. Leonard over the Sarthe River in Alençon and had a premonition that they would marry. Three months later on 13 July 1858 the wedding took place in the Church of Notre-Dame now the Basilica of Notre-Dame in Alençon. The couple lived in Alençon, initially at 15 rue du Pont-Neuf and later at 35 rue Saint-Blaise, where St. Thérèse was born. They had nine children only five of whom survived infancy and early childhood. The surviving children were Marie, Pauline, Léonie, Céline and Thérèse all of whom embraced the religious life. Marie, Pauline, Céline and Thérèse became Carmelite Sisters in Lisieux and were known respectively as Sr Marie of the Sacred Heart, Mother Agnes of Jesus, Sr. Geneviève of the Holy Face and Sr. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. Léonie became a Visitantine Sister, in Caen, and was known as Sr. Françoise Thérèse. Thérèse, their youngest daughter, was only four-year-old when Zélie died in 1877. After this Louis and his five daughters moved to Les Buissonnets in Lisieux. In 1887 Thérèse asked for and received her father's permission to enter Carmel which she did in 1888.

Tuesday, July 13 ~ Fifteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time

Saint Henry

Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:20-24 Jesus began to reproach the towns where most of his mighty deeds had been done, since they had not repented. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And as for you, Capernaum: Will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to the nether world. For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

Meditation: If Jesus were to walk down the streets of any community – your neighborhood, perhaps – what would he say? Would he issue a warning like the one he gave to Chorazin and Bethsaida? And how would you respond? Wherever Jesus went he did mighty works to show the people how much God had for them. Chorazin and Bethsaida had been blessed with the visitation of God. They heard the good news and experienced the wonderful works which Jesus did for them. Why was Jesus upset with these communities? The word woe can mean misfortune, calamity, distress, sorrow, sadness, misery, grief, or wretchedness. It is as much an expression of sorrowful pity and grief as it is of dismay over the calamity and destruction which comes as a result of human folly, sin, and ignorance.

Prayer: O God, whose abundant grace prepared Saint Henry to be raised by you in a wonderful way from the cares of earthly rule to heavenly realms, grant, we pray, through his intercession, that amid the uncertainties of this world we may hasten towards you with minds made pure. 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: Repentance demands constant change – a change of heart, a change of mind, and always a call to change the way we live our life. God's word is life-giving and it saves us from destruction – the destruction of heart, mind, and soul as well as body. Jesus' anger is directed toward sin and everything which hinders us from doing the will of God. In love he calls us to walk in his way of truth and freedom, grace and loving-kindness, justice and holiness. Do you receive his word with faith and obedience or with doubt and indifference?

Wednesday, July 14 ~ Fifteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Virgin ~ the "Lily of the Mohawks"

Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:25-27 At that time Jesus exclaimed: "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him."

Meditation: In today's gospel Jesus thanks the Father in heaven for revealing to his disciples the wisdom and knowledge of God. His prayer also contains a warning that pride can keep us from the love and knowledge of God. What makes us ignorant and blind to the things of God? Certainly intellectual pride, coldness of heart, and stubbornness of will shut out God and his kingdom. Pride is the root of all vice and the strongest influence propelling us to sin. It first vanquishes the heart, making it cold and indifferent towards God. It also closes the mind to God's truth and wisdom for our lives. What is pride? It is the inordinate love of oneself at the expense of others and the exaggerated estimation of one's own learning and importance. Jesus contrasts intellectual pride with child-like simplicity and humility. The simple of heart are "childlike" (not childish) in the sense that they see purely without pretense and acknowledge their dependence and trust in the one who is greater, wiser, and more trustworthy. They seek one thing – the "summum bonum" or "greatest good" who is God himself. Simplicity of heart is wedded with humility, the queen of virtues, because humility inclines the heart towards grace and truth. Just as pride is the root of every sin and evil, so humility is the only soil in which the grace of God can take root. It alone takes the right attitude before God and allows him as God to do all. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble (ref. Book of Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6).

Prayer: O God, who desired the Virgin St. Kateri Tekakwitha to flower among Native Americans in a life of innocence, grant, through her intercession, that when all are gathered into your Church from every nation, tribe and tongue, they may magnify you in a single canticle of praise. 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 makes a claim which no one would have dared to make – he is the perfect revelation of God. One of the greatest truths of the Christian faith is that we can know the living God. Our knowledge of God is not simply limited to knowing something about God, but we can 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 and unconditionally.

Thursday, July 15 ~ Fifteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time Saint Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus said: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

Meditation: What does the yoke of Jesus refer to in the gospel? The Jews used the image of a yoke to express submission to God. They spoke of the yoke of the law, the yoke of the commandments, the yoke of the kingdom, the yoke of God. Jesus says his yoke is "easy." The Greek word for "easy" can also mean "well-fitting". Yokes were tailor-made to fit the oxen well. We are commanded to put on the "sweet yoke of Jesus" and to live the "heavenly way of life and happiness". Jesus also says his "burden is light". There's a story of a man who once met a boy carrying a smaller crippled lad on his back. "That's a heavy load you are carrying there," exclaimed the man. "He ain't heavy; he's my brother!" responded the boy. Think about it...no burden is ever too heavy when it is given in love and carried out in love.

Prayer: Grant, we pray, almighty God, that, just as we celebrate the heavenly birthday of the Bishop Saint Bonaventure, we may benefit from his great learning and constantly imitate the ardor of his charity. 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 offers us a new kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. In his kingdom sins are not only forgiven but removed, and eternal life is poured out for all its citizens. This is not a political kingdom, but a spiritual one. The yoke of Christ's kingdom, his kingly rule and way of life, liberates us from the burden of guilt and from the oppression of sinful habits and hurtful desires. Only Jesus can lift the burden of sin and the weight of hopelessness from us. Jesus used the analogy of a yoke to explain how we can exchange the burden of sin and despair for a weight of glory and victory with him. The yoke which Jesus invites us to embrace is his way of love, grace, and freedom from the power of sin.

Friday, July 16 ~ Fifteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time **Our Lady of Mount Carmel**

Holy Gospel: Matthew 12:46-50 While Jesus was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with him. But he said in reply to the one who told him, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Meditation: God offers to each of us the greatest of relationships - union of heart, mind, and spirit with himself, Jesus Christ, who is the very author and source of love (1 John 4:8,16). God's love never fails, never forgets, never compromises, never lies, never lets us down nor disappoints us. His love is consistent, unwavering, unconditional, and unstoppable. Nothing can deter him from ever leaving us, ignoring us, or treating us unkindly. He will love us no matter what. It is his nature to love. That is why he created us - to be united with him and to share in his love and unity (1 John 3:1). God is a trinity of persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and a community of love. That is why Jesus challenged his followers and even his own earthly family to recognize that God is the true source of all relationships. God wants all of our relationships to be rooted in his love.

Prayer: May the venerable intercession of the glorious Virgin Mary come to our aid, we pray, O Lord, so that, fortified by her protection, we may reach the mountain which is Christ. 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 Mount Carmel: O Most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine, splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in this my necessity. O Star of the Sea, help me and show me herein You are my Mother. O Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech You from the bottom of my heart to succor me in this necessity. There are none that can withstand Your power. O show me herein You are my Mother. O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee. (3 times) Sweet Mother, I place this cause in Your hands (mention your request now).

Contemplation: God did not intend for us to be alone, but to be with others. That is why he gives us virtually unlimited opportunities for developing relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Why does Jesus seem to ignore his own relatives when they pressed to see him? His love and respect for his mother and his relatives (and for all people) is unquestionable; we must live accordingly.

About the Memorial to Our Lady of Mount Carmel: Sacred Scripture celebrated the beauty of Carmel where the prophet Elijah defended the purity of Israel's faith in the living God. In the twelfth century, hermits withdrew to that mountain and later founded the Carmelite order devoted to the contemplative life under the patronage of Mary, the holy Mother of God. Devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel is worldwide, and most Catholics are familiar with the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, also known as the Brown Scapular. Mary appeared to St. Simon Stock on July 16, 1251, and gave him the scapular with the following words, which are preserved in a fourteenth century narrative: "This will be for you and for all Carmelites the privilege, that he who dies in this will not suffer eternal fire." The feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was instituted for the Carmelites in 1332, and extended to the whole Church in 1726.

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