

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)

“Let each of us accept the truth of the following statement and try to make it our most fundamental principle: Christ's teaching will never let us down, while worldly wisdom always will. Christ Himself said that this sort of wisdom was like a house with nothing but sand as its foundation, while His own was like a building with solid rock as its foundation.” ~SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

**Monday, September 27 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Vincent de Paul, Priest; Founder of the Vincentian Order**

Holy Gospel: Luke 9:46-50 An argument arose among the disciples about which of them was the greatest. Jesus realized the intention of their hearts and took a child and placed it by his side and said to them, “Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. For the one who is least among all of you is the one who is the greatest.” Then John said in reply, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow in our company.” Jesus said to him, “Do not prevent him, for whoever is not against you is for you.”

Meditation: It is somewhat surprising to see that even the disciples of Jesus argued about who is the greatest among them. And yet, as they are human, we see the appetite for glory and greatness seems to be inbred in all humans – even among the disciples! On one hand, who doesn't cherish the ambition to be “somebody” whom others admire rather than a “nobody”? Even the psalms speak about the glory God has destined for us. “You have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor” (Psalm 8:5). Jesus made a dramatic gesture by placing a child next to himself to show his disciples who really is the greatest in the kingdom of God. What can a little child possibly teach us about greatness? Children in the ancient world had no rights, position, or privileges of their own. They were socially at the “bottom of the rung” and at the service of their parents, much like the household staff and domestic servants. What is the significance of Jesus' gesture? Jesus elevated a little child in the presence of his disciples by placing the child in a privileged position of honor at his right side. It is customary, even today, to seat the guest of honor at the right side of the host. Who is the greatest in God's kingdom? The one who is humble and lowly of heart — who instead of asserting their rights willingly empty themselves of pride and self-seeking glory by taking the lowly position of a servant or child. Knowing this, do you still seek glory, fame and greatness among your human peers?

Prayer: O God, who for the relief of the poor and the formation of the clergy endowed the Priest Saint Vincent de Paul with apostolic virtues, grant, we pray, that, afire with that same spirit, we may love what he loved and put into practice what he taught. 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: We tend to search around looking for people to model our lives after, when Jesus, himself, is our model. He came not to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28). Paul the Apostles states that Jesus “emptied himself and took the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7). Jesus lowered himself (he whose place is at the right hand of God the Father) and took on our lowly nature that he might raise us up and clothe us in his divine nature. “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). If we want to be filled with God's life and power, then we need to empty ourselves of everything which stands in the way — pride, envy, self-seeking glory, vanity, and possessiveness. God wants empty vessels so he can fill them with his own glory, power, and love (2 Cor. 4:7). Are you ready to humble yourself and to serve as Jesus did?

**Tuesday, September 28 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Wenceslaus, Martyr; Saint Lawrence Ruiz and companions, Martyrs**

Holy Gospel: Luke 9:51-56 When the days for Jesus to be taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, and he sent messengers ahead of him. On the way they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they journeyed to another village.

Meditation: Are you surprised to see two of Jesus' disciples praying for the destruction of a Samaritan village? The Jews and Samaritans had been divided for centuries. Jewish pilgrims who passed through Samaritan territory were often assaulted. Jesus did the unthinkable for a Jew. He not only decided to travel through Samaritan territory at personal risk, but he also asked for hospitality in one of their villages! Jesus' offer of friendship was rebuffed. Is there any wonder that the disciples were indignant and felt justified in wanting to see retribution done to this village? Wouldn't you respond the same way? Jesus, however, rebukes his disciples for their lack of toleration. Jesus had "set his face toward Jerusalem" to die on a cross that all might be reconciled with God and be united as one people in Christ.

Prayer ~ Saint Wenceslaus: O God, who taught the Martyr Saint Wenceslaus to place the heavenly Kingdom before an earthly one, grant through his prayers that, denying ourselves, we may hold fast to you with all our heart. 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.

Prayer ~ Saint Lawrence Ruiz and Companions: Grant us, we pray, Lord God, the same perseverance shown by your Martyrs Saint Lawrence Ruiz and his companions in serving you and their neighbor, since those persecuted for the sake of righteousness are blessed in your Kingdom. 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: Tolerance is a much-needed virtue today – not "tolerance" when we enable bad or sinful behaviors by turning a blind eye or a deaf ear or by saying "if it feels good, do it" thus being tolerant for the wrong thing or for the wrong motive. Right and wrong, defined by God, still exist. Instead being "tolerant" by exhibiting Christian love which seeks the highest good of both one's neighbor and one's enemy. Take for example Abraham Lincoln, who as president was criticized for his courtesy and tolerance towards his enemies during the American Civil War. President Lincoln's response? He said: "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?" Which begs the question: How do you treat those who cross you and cause you trouble? Do you seek their good rather than their harm?

Wednesday, September 29 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time Feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels

Holy Gospel: John 1:47-51 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Here is a true child of Israel. There is no duplicity in him." Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." And he said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Meditation: Who are the angels and why do they intervene between heaven and earth? In short, Sacred Scripture tells us the angels are God's servants and messengers. "They are the mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word" (Psalm 103:20). The angels belong to Christ and were created for and through him (Colossians 1:16). The Letter to the Hebrews speaks of the role of the angels in God's plan of salvation: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14) The angels are not only messengers but protectors and guardians as well. "For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways" (Psalm 91:11). We are not alone in our struggle against sin and evil in the world. The armies of heaven fight for us and with us in the spiritual battle for our hearts, minds, and wills.

Prayer: O God, who dispose in marvelous order ministries both angelic and human, graciously grant that our life on earth may be defended by those who watch over us as they minister perpetually to you in heaven. 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: Saint John Paul II, while serving as Pope, provided a great deal of catechesis on the angels during his General Audiences beginning in July of 1986 (you can read these in their entirety via the Vatican web site: www.vatican.va). Worth contemplating today: "In the perfection of their spiritual nature the angels are called from the beginning, by virtue of their intelligence, to know the truth and to love the good which they know in truth in a more full and perfect way than is possible to man. This love is an act of a free will, and therefore for the angels also freedom implies a possibility of choice for or against the Good which they know, that is, God himself. It must be repeated here what we already mentioned earlier in regard to man: by creating free beings, God willed that there should be realized in the world true love which is possible only on the basis of freedom. He willed therefore that the creature, constituted in the image and likeness of his Creator, should be able in the greatest degree possible to render himself similar to God who "is love" (1 Jn 4:16). By creating the pure spirits as free beings, God in his Providence could not but foresee also the possibility of the angels' sin. But precisely because Providence is eternal wisdom which loves, God would have been able to draw from the history of this sin, incomparably more radical inasmuch as it was the sin of a pure spirit, the definitive good of the whole created cosmos."

About this Feast and the Archangels: The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us that, "[T]he existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls "angels" is a truth of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition." Angels are pure, created spirits. The name "angel" means "servant" or "messenger of God." Angels are celestial or heavenly beings, on a higher order than human beings. Angels have no bodies and do not depend on matter for their existence or activity. They are distinct from saints, which humans can become. Angels have intellect and will, and are immortal. They are a vast multitude, but each is an individual person. Archangels are one of the nine choirs of angels listed in the Bible. In ascending order, the choirs or classes are 1) Angels, 2) Archangels, 3) Principalities, 4) Powers, 5) Virtues, 6) Dominations, 7) Thrones, 8) Cherubim, and 9) Seraphim. The name of the **Archangel Michael** means, in Hebrew, *who is like unto God?* and he is also known as "the prince of the heavenly host." He is usually pictured as a strong warrior, dressed in armor and wearing sandals. His name appears in Scripture four times, twice in the Book of Daniel, and once each in the Epistle of St. Jude and the Book of Revelation. From Revelation we learn of the battle in heaven, with St. Michael and his angels combating Lucifer and the other fallen angels (or devils). We invoke St. Michael to help us in our fight against Satan; to rescue souls from Satan, especially at the hour of death; to be the champion of the Jews in the Old Testament and now Christians; and to bring souls to judgment. **Archangel Gabriel's** name means *God is my strength*. Biblically he appears three times as a messenger. He had been sent to Daniel to explain a vision concerning the Messiah. He appeared to Zachary when he was offering incense in the Temple, to foretell the birth of his son, St. John the Baptist. St. Gabriel is most known as the angel chosen by God to be the messenger of the Annunciation, to announce to mankind the mystery of the Incarnation. The angel's salutation to our Lady, so simple and yet so full of meaning, Hail Mary, full of grace, has become the constant and familiar prayer of all Christian people. Our knowledge of the **Archangel Raphael** comes to us from the book of Tobit. His mission as wonderful healer and fellow traveler with the youthful Tobias has caused him to be invoked for journeys and at critical moments in life. Tradition also holds that Raphael is the angel that stirred the waters at the healing sheep pool in Bethesda. His name means *God has healed*.

Thursday, September 30 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time **Saint Jerome, Priest and Doctor of the Church**

Holy Gospel: Luke 10:1-12 Jesus appointed seventy-two other disciples whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.' Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, 'The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you.' Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand. I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town."

Meditation: When Jesus commissioned seventy of his disciples to go on mission, he gave them a vision of a vast field that is ready to be harvested for the kingdom of God. Jesus frequently used the image of a

harvest to convey the coming of God's reign on earth. The harvest is the fruition of much labor and growth, beginning with the sowing of seeds, then growth to maturity, and finally the reaping of fruit for the harvest. In like manner, the word of God is sown in the hearts of receptive men and women who hear his word and accept it with faith, trust and obedience, and then share the abundant fruit of God's word in their life with others. The harvest Jesus had in mind was not only the gathering in of the people of Israel, but all the peoples (and nations) of the world – including our corner of the world, wherever that may be.

Prayer: O God, who gave the Priest Saint Jerome a living and tender love for Sacred Scripture, grant that your people may be ever more fruitfully nourished by your Word and find in it the fount of life. 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: Jesus gave his disciples instructions for how they were to carry out their ministry. They must go and serve as people without guile, full of charity (selfless giving in love) and peace, and simplicity. They must give their full attention to the proclamation of God's kingdom and not be diverted by other lesser things. They must travel light – take only what was essential and leave behind whatever would distract them – in order to focus time and attention on the task of speaking the word of the God. They must do their work, not for what they can get out of it, but for what they can give freely to others, without expecting reward or payment. God gives us his life-giving word that we may have abundant life in him. He wills to work in and through each of us for his glory. God shares his word with us and he commissions us to speak it boldly, plainly, and lovingly to others. And so in this day and age when “political correctness” is highly revered – often at the expense of the truth of the Gospel – you might ask yourself whether or not you witness the truth and joy of the Gospel by word and example.

Friday, October 1 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, Virgin and Doctor of the Church

Holy Gospel: Luke 10:13-16 Jesus said to them, “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, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And as for you, Capernaum, ‘Will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to the netherworld.’ Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.”

Meditation: Why was Jesus upset with these communities? The word woe is also translated as alas. It is as much as an expression of sorrowful pity as it is of anger. Why does Jesus lament and issue a stern warning? The people who heard the gospel here very likely responded with indifference. Jesus upbraids them for doing nothing! Repentance demands change – a change of heart and way of life. God's word is life-giving and it saves us from destruction – the destruction of soul as well as body. Jesus' anger is directed toward sin and everything which hinders us from doing the will of God and receiving his blessing. In love he calls us to walk in his way of truth and freedom, grace and mercy, justice and holiness.

Prayer: O God, who open your Kingdom to those who are humble and to little ones, lead us to follow trustingly in the little way of Saint Thérèse, so that through her intercession we may see your eternal glory revealed. 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 Jesus were to visit your neighborhood community and walk the streets of our town today, 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 done 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.

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October is Dedicated as the Month of the Holy Rosary

