

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 October – a Marian Month – is dedicated to the Most Holy Rosary.

“While the world changes the Cross stands firm.”

~ SAINT BRUNO

Monday, October 5 ~ Twenty-Seventh Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Faustina Kowalska, Virgin

Holy Gospel: Luke 10:25-37 There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test Jesus and said, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” He said in reply, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” He replied to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn, and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Meditation: When personal tragedy strikes, or when there is a great human calamity, people will often ask “If God is all-loving and compassionate, then why is there so much suffering and evil in this world?” Jesus’ parable about a highway robbery gives us a helpful hint. Jesus told this dramatic story in response to a devout Jew who wanted to understand how to apply God’s great commandment of love to his everyday life circumstances. In so many words this religious-minded Jewish person said: “I want to love God as best as I can and I want to love my neighbor as well. But how do I know that I am fulfilling my duty to love my neighbor as myself?” Jesus must have smiled when he heard this man challenge him to explain one’s duty towards their neighbor. For the Jewish believer the law of love was plain and simple: “treat your neighbor as you would treat yourself.” The real issue for this believer was the correct definition of who is “my neighbor.” He understood “neighbor” to mean one’s fellow Jew who belonged to the same covenant which God made with the people of Israel. Up to a certain point, Jesus agreed with this sincere expert but, at the same time, he challenged him to see that God’s view of neighbor went far beyond his narrow definition.

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, who in the abundance of your kindness surpass the merits and the desires of those who entreat you, pour out your mercy upon us to pardon what conscience dreads and to give what prayer does not dare to ask. 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: What does Jesus’ story tell us about true love for one’s neighbor? First, we must be willing to help even if others brought trouble on themselves through their own fault or negligence. Second, our love and concern to help others in need must be practical. Good intentions and showing pity, or empathizing with others, are not enough. And lastly, our love for others must be as wide and as inclusive as God’s love. God excludes no one from his care and concern. God’s love is unconditional. So we must be ready to do good to others for their sake, just as God is good to us. Jesus not only taught God’s way of love, but he showed how far God was willing to go to share in our suffering and to restore us to wholeness

of life and happiness. Jesus overcame sin, suffering, and death through his victory on the cross. His death brought us freedom from slavery to sin and the promise of everlasting life with God. He willingly shared in our suffering to bring us to the source of true healing and freedom from sin and oppression. True compassion not only identifies and empathizes with the one who is in pain, but takes that pain on oneself in order to bring freedom and restoration.

Tuesday, October 6 ~ Twenty-Seventh Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Bruno, Priest, Founder of the Carthusian Order;
Blessed Marie Rose Durocher, Virgin

Holy Gospel: John 1:47-51 Jesus entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

Meditation: Jesus enjoyed visiting the home of Martha and Mary as they were gracious and hospitable. But notice in this brief encounter we see two very different temperaments in Martha and Mary. Martha loved to serve, but in her anxious manner of waiting on Jesus, she caused unrest. Mary, in her simple and trusting manner, waited on Jesus by sitting attentively at his feet. She instinctively knew that what Jesus the Lord most wanted at that moment was her attentive presence. Who are we more like – Martha or Mary? When in prayer in church or at home or work does anxiety and preoccupation keep us from listening and from giving the Lord our undivided attention. What about that mobile phone that seems to be glued to our hand, waiting for the next text message from someone, rather than turning it off so we can focus totally on our prayer conversation with Jesus? Folks, the Lord asks us to give him our concerns and anxieties because he is trustworthy and able to meet any need we have. His grace frees us from needless concerns and preoccupation. And so we must ask ourselves: Do you seek the Lord fully and attentively? Also, are you gracious and hospitable to Jesus – do you welcome him?

Prayer ~ Saint Bruno: O God, who called Saint Bruno to serve you in solitude, grant, through his intercession, that amid the changes of this world we may constantly look to you alone. 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 ~ Blessed Marie Rose Durocher: Lord, who enkindled in the heart of Blessed Marie Rose Durocher the flame of ardent charity and a great desire to cooperate in the mission of the Church as a teacher, grant us that same active love, so that, in responding to the needs of the world today, we may lead our brothers and sisters to the blessedness of eternal life. 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 Jesus desires that we make a place for him, not only in our hearts, but in our homes and in the daily circumstances of our lives as well. We honor the Lord when we offer to him everything we have and everything we do. After all, everything we have is an outright gift from God (1 Chronicles 29:14). Paul the Apostle urges us to give God glory in everything: "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:17). Practically speaking, do you have a framed image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus hanging noticeably in your home? Do you have crucifixes hanging in various rooms of your home? Is your Bible a ready source of reading in your living room, den, or bedside? When is the last time you had your home blessed? All of these help us remember Jesus by visibly welcoming him into our physical homes (dwellings) – honoring him, remembering him, praying to him, thanking him – and will nourish and strengthen the spiritual home we build in each of us.

Wednesday, October 7 ~ Twenty-Seventh Week in Ordinary Time
Our Lady of the Rosary

"The Church has always attributed particular efficacy to this prayer, entrusting to the Rosary, to its choral recitation and to its constant practice, the most difficult problems. At times when Christianity itself seemed under threat, its deliverance was attributed to the power of this prayer, and Our Lady of the Rosary was acclaimed as the one whose intercession brought salvation."

~Saint John Paul II, Apostolic Letter ROSARIUM VIRGINIS MARIAE, October 2002, No. 39

Holy Gospel: Luke 1:26-38 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Meditation: Do you want to live a grace-filled life? Of course you do! The angel Gabriel salutes Mary as "full of grace." To become the mother of the Savior, Mary was enriched by God with gifts to enable her to assume this awesome role. There is a venerable tradition among many Christians, dating back to the early church, for honoring Mary as the spotless virgin who bore the Son of God in her womb. A number of early church fathers link Mary's obedience to this singular grace of God, including Saint Irenaeus who said: "Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race... The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith."

Prayer: Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Contemplation: October is the Month of the Rosary – a time set aside to devote our time and attention to this ancient form of prayer, the devotion to Our Lady, and the Christocentric walk we take with Jesus when praying and meditating on the mysteries and life of Jesus our Savior. By praying the rosary we also implore the aid of our Blessed Mother to help us in the various challenges and struggles each of us face in life, and to help those whom we pray the rosary on their behalf. Recall the words of Saint Paul: "In all things we suffer tribulation, but we are not distressed; we are sore pressed, but we are not destitute; we endure persecution, but we are not forsaken; we are cast down, but we do not perish; always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame."

Thursday, October 8 ~ Twenty-Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:5-13 Jesus said to his disciples: "Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,' and he says in reply from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.' I tell you, if he does not get up to give him the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence. "And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

Meditation: Jesus used the illustration of a late-night traveler to teach his listeners an important lesson about how God treats us in contrast to the kind of treatment we might expect from good neighbors. The rule of hospitality in biblical times required the cooperation of the entire community in entertaining an unexpected or late-night guest. Whether the guest was hungry or not, a meal would be served. In a small village it would be easy to know who had baked bread that day. Bread was essential for a meal because it served as a utensil for dipping and eating from the common dishes. Asking for bread from one's neighbor was both a common occurrence and an expected favor. To refuse to give bread would bring shame because it was a sign of in-hospitality.

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, who in the abundance of your kindness surpass the merits and the desires of those who entreat you, pour out your mercy upon us to pardon what conscience dreads and to give what prayer does not dare to ask. 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 will always give us what we need – not what we want, but what we need. There is a difference, obviously, and we should find contentment that God does provide, not the way we want, but the way he wants for us.

Friday, October 9 ~ Twenty-Seventh Week in Ordinary Time Saint Denis, Bishop and Martyr, and Companions, Martyrs

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:15-26 When Jesus had driven out a demon, some of the crowd said: "By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons." Others, to test him, asked him for a sign from heaven. But he knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house. And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that it is by Beelzebul that I drive out demons. If I, then, drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man fully armed guards his palace, his possessions are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him, he takes away the armor on which he relied and distributes the spoils. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. "When an unclean spirit goes out of someone, it roams through arid regions searching for rest but, finding none, it says, 'I shall return to my home from which I came.' But upon returning, it finds it swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and brings back seven other spirits more wicked than itself who move in and dwell there, and the last condition of that man is worse than the first."

Meditation: Evil is not an impersonal force that just happens. It has a name and a face and it seeks to master every heart and soul on the face of the earth (1 Peter 5:8-9). Scripture identifies the Evil One by many names, 'Satan,' 'Beelzebul' - the 'prince of demons,' the 'Devil,' the 'Deceiver,' the 'Father of Lies,' and 'Lucifer,' the fallen angel who broke rank with God and established his own army and kingdom in opposition to God. Jesus declared that he came to overthrow the power of Satan and his kingdom (John 12:31). Jesus' numerous exorcisms brought freedom to many who were troubled and oppressed by the work of evil spirits. Jesus himself encountered personal opposition and battle with Satan when he was put to the test in the wilderness just before his public ministry (Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:1). He overcame the Evil One through his obedience to the will of his Father.

Prayer: O God, who sent Saint Denis and his companions to preach your glory to the nations and strengthened them for their mission with the virtue of constancy in suffering, grant, we pray, that we may imitate them in disdaining prosperity in this world and in being undaunted by any trial. 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: When you see evil at work in the world, what kind of protection do you seek for yourself and for others? Jesus came to free us from the greatest danger of all - the corrupting force of evil which destroys us from within and makes us slaves to sin and Satan (John 8:34). Seek Jesus first, foremost and always.

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops;
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