

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.

“Remember that you have only one soul; that you have only one death to die; that you have only one life, which is short and has to be lived by you alone; and there is only one Glory, which is eternal. If you do this, there will be many things about which you care nothing.” ~ SAINT TERESA OF JESUS

Monday, October 12 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:29-32 While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them, “This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here.”

Meditation: In the busyness of our lives, jumping from one thing to another, sometimes with the attention span of a gnat, multi-tasking all throughout the day, do you pay attention to warning signs? Much harm could be avoided if people took the warning signs seriously. When the religious leaders in today’s Gospel demanded a sign from Jesus, he gave them a warning to avert spiritual disaster. It was characteristic of the Jews that they demanded "signs" from God's messengers to authenticate their claims. When the religious leaders pressed Jesus to give proof for his claims he says in so many words that he is God's sign and that they need no further evidence from heaven than his own person.

Prayer: May your grace, O Lord, we pray, at all times go before us and follow after and make us always determined to carry out 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 Jesus came to set us free from slavery to sin and hurtful desires. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit he pours his love into our hearts that we may understand his will for our lives and walk in his way of holiness. God searches our hearts, not to condemn us, but to show us where we need his saving grace and help. He calls us to seek him with true repentance, humility, and the honesty to see our sins for what they really are - a rejection of his love and will for our lives. God will transform us if we listen to his word and allow his Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Ask the Lord to renew your mind and to increase your thirst for his wisdom. James says that “the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity”(James 3:17). A double-minded person cannot receive this kind of wisdom. The single of heart desire one thing alone - God's pleasure. God wants us to delight in him and to know the freedom of his truth and love.

Tuesday, October 13 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:37-41 After Jesus had spoken, a Pharisee invited him to dine at his home. He entered and reclined at table to eat. The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not observe the prescribed washing before the meal. The Lord said to him, “Oh you Pharisees! Although you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, inside you are filled with plunder and evil. You fools! Did not the maker of the outside also make the inside? But as to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you.”

Meditation: after hearing Jesus preach, the Pharisee in today’s Gospel invited Jesus to dinner, no doubt, because he wanted to hear more from this extraordinary man who spoke the word of God as no one else had done before. It was not unusual for a rabbi to give a teaching over dinner. Jesus, however, did

something which offended his host. He did not perform the ceremonial washing of hands before beginning the meal. Did Jesus forget or was he deliberately performing a sign to reveal something to his host? Jesus turned the table on his host by chiding him for uncleanness of heart. Which begs the question (and a simple one at that!): which is more important to God - clean hands or a clean mind and heart?

Prayer: May your grace, O Lord, we pray, at all times go before us and follow after and make us always determined to carry out 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: Jesus chided the Pharisees for harboring evil thoughts - greed, pride, bitterness, envy, arrogance, and the like - which can be sinful in and of themselves, but can also lead us to commit sins. Why does he urge them - and us - to give alms? When we give freely and generously to those in need we express love, compassion, kindness, and mercy. And if the heart is full of love and compassion, then there is no room for envy, greed, bitterness, and the like. So you might ask yourself today: Do I allow God's love to transform my mind, my heart, and thus undertake actions toward my neighbor? If not, why not?

Wednesday, October 14 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Callistus, Pope and Martyr

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:42-46 The Lord said: "Woe to you Pharisees! You pay tithes of mint and of rue and of every garden herb, but you pay no attention to judgment and to love for God. These you should have done, without overlooking the others. Woe to you Pharisees! You love the seat of honor in synagogues and greetings in marketplaces. Woe to you! You are like unseen graves over which people unknowingly walk." Then one of the scholars of the law said to him in reply, "Teacher, by saying this you are insulting us too." And he said, "Woe also to you scholars of the law! You impose on people burdens hard to carry, but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them."

Meditation: Why did Jesus lament and issue such a stern rebuke? Jesus was angry with the religious leaders because they failed to listen to God's word and they misled the people they were supposed to guide in the ways of God. The scribes devoted their lives to the study of the Law of Moses and regarded themselves as legal experts in it. They divided the Ten Commandments and precepts into thousands of tiny rules and regulations. They were so exacting in their interpretations and in trying to live them out, that they had little time for anything else. By the time they finished compiling their interpretations it took no less than fifty volumes to contain them! In their misguided zeal, they required unnecessary and burdensome rules which obscured the more important matters of religion, such as love of God and love of neighbor. They were leading people to Pharisaism rather than to God. Jesus used the example of tithing to show how far they had missed the mark. God had commanded a tithe of the first fruits of one's labor as an expression of thanksgiving and honor for his providential care for his people (Deuteronomy 14:22; Leviticus 27:30). The scribes, however, went to extreme lengths to tithe on insignificant things with great mathematical accuracy. They were very attentive to minute matters of little importance, but they neglected to care for the needy and the weak. Jesus admonished them because their hearts were not right. They were filled with pride and contempt for others while neglecting to show charity, especially to the weak and the poor.

Prayer: O God, who raised up Pope Saint Callistus the First to serve the Church and attend devoutly to Christ's faithful departed, strengthen us, we pray, by his witness to the faith, so that, rescued from the slavery of corruption, we may merit an incorruptible inheritance. 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: Always remember that the essence of God's commandments is love - love of the supreme good - God himself and love of our neighbor who is made in the image and likeness of God. God is love (1 John 4:8) and everything he does flows from his love for us. God's love is unconditional and is wholly directed towards the good of others. True love both embraces and lifts the burdens of others. Paul the Apostle reminds us that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given us" (Romans 5:5). Do you help your neighbors carry their burdens? God gives each of us sufficient grace for each day to love as he loves and to lift the burdens of others that they, too, may experience the grace and love of Jesus Christ.

Thursday, October 15 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Teresa of Jesus, Virgin and Doctor of the Church

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:5-13 The Lord said: "Woe to you who build the memorials of the prophets whom your fathers killed. Consequently, you bear witness and give consent to the deeds of your

ancestors, for they killed them and you do the building. Therefore, the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and Apostles; some of them they will kill and persecute' in order that this generation might be charged with the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who died between the altar and the temple building. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be charged with their blood! Woe to you, scholars of the law! You have taken away the key of knowledge. You yourselves did not enter and you stopped those trying to enter." When Jesus left, the scribes and Pharisees began to act with hostility toward him and to interrogate him about many things, for they were plotting to catch him at something he might say.

Meditation: How can God's wisdom free us from being double-minded and spiritually blind? God sent his prophets to open the ears of his people to hear and understand God's word and intention for their lives. God's wisdom is personified in the voice of the prophets, a voice that often brought rejection and death because they spoke for God rather than for human favor and approval. Jesus chastised many of the religious leaders of his day for being double-minded and for demanding from others standards which they refused to satisfy. They professed admiration for the prophets from the past by building their tombs while at the same time they opposed the message that the prophets spoke in God's name. They rejected the prophets' warnings and closed their ears to the word of God. Are you guilty of doing the same?

Prayer: O God, who through your Spirit raised up Saint Teresa of Jesus to show the Church the way to seek perfection, grant that we may always be nourished by the food of her heavenly teaching and fired with longing for true holiness. 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 religious lawyers and scribes held the "key of knowledge" since they were the official interpreters of the Scriptures. Unfortunately their interpretation of the Scriptures became so distorted and difficult to understand that others were "shut off" to the Scriptures. They not only shut themselves to heaven - they also hindered others from understanding God's word. Through pride and envy, they rejected not only the prophets of old, but God's final prophet and Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the "key of David" (see Isaiah 22:22; Revelations 3:7) who opens heaven for those who accept him as Lord and Savior. He is the "Wisdom of God" and source of everlasting life. Only the humble of heart - those who thirst for God and acknowledge his word as truth - can truly understand the wisdom which comes from above [see Psalm 119:99ff: "I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation."]. God is ever ready to speak his word to us and to give us true wisdom and understanding so that we make seek perfection as did Saint Teresa of Jesus. These well-known lines she composed are worth contemplating: "Let nothing disturb thee, nothing dismay thee. All is passing, God ever remains. Patience obtains all. Whoever possesses God cannot lack anything for God alone suffices."

Friday, October 16 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time **Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, Virgin; Saint Gerard Majella, Priest**

Holy Gospel: Luke 12:1-7 At that time: So many people were crowding together that they were trampling one another underfoot. Jesus began to speak, first to his disciples, "Beware of the leaven—that is, the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. "There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the darkness will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed on the housetops. I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body but after that can do no more. I shall show you whom to fear. Be afraid of the one who after killing has the power to cast into Gehenna; yes, I tell you, be afraid of that one. Are not five sparrows sold for two small coins? Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God. Even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows."

Meditation: What does leaven have to do with hypocrisy? To the Jews leaven was a sign of evil. It was a piece of dough from left-over bread which fermented. Fermentation was associated with decay and rotting - the state of foul-smelling decomposition. Why did Jesus warn his disciples to avoid the ways of the Pharisees? The Pharisees wanted everyone to recognize that they were pious and good Jews because they meticulously and scrupulously performed their religious duties. Jesus turned the table on them by declaring that outward appearance doesn't always match the inward intentions of the heart. Anyone can display outward signs of goodness while inwardly harboring evil thoughts and intentions. The word "hypocrite" means "actor" - someone who pretends to be what he or she is not. But who can truly be good, but God alone? Hypocrisy thrives on making a good appearance and masking what they don't want others to see. The good news is that God's light exposes the darkness of evil and sin in our hearts, even the sin which is unknown to us. And God's light transforms our hearts and minds and enables us to

overcome hatred with love, pride with humility, and pretense with integrity and truthfulness. God gives grace to the humble and contrite of heart to enable us to overcome the leaven of insincerity and hypocrisy in our lives.

Prayer ~ Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque: Pour out on us, we pray, O Lord, the spirit with which you so remarkably endowed Saint Margaret Mary, so that we may come to know that love of Christ which surpasses all understanding and be utterly filled with your fullness. 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 to Saint Gerard Majella for an Expectant Mother: Great Saint Gerard, beloved servant of Jesus Christ, perfect imitator of Jesus, and devoted child of the Mother of God, enkindle within my heart one spark of that Heavenly fire of charity which glowed in yours. Because you bore, without murmur or complaint, the calumnies of wicked men when falsely accused of crime, you have been raised up by God as the patron and protector of expectant mothers. Preserve me/her in the dangers of motherhood, and shield the child I/she now bear(s), that it may be brought safely to the light of day, and receive the sacrament of baptism. Amen.

Contemplation: What is godly fear? It is reverence for the One who made us in love and who sustains us in mercy, compassion, love and kindness. The greatest injury or loss which we can experience is not physical but spiritual - the loss of one's soul and life to the power of hell. A healthy fear of God leads to spiritual maturity, wisdom, and right judgment and it frees us from the tyranny of sinful pride, deceit, and cowardice - especially in the face of evil, falsehood, and deception. Do you trust in God's grace and mercy and do you submit to his life-giving word of truth and righteousness? Why settle for anything less?

About Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque: A self-effacing nun in the Visitation Convent at Paray-le-Monial, France, was inspired by the Lord Jesus to establish the devotion of the Holy Hour; her name was St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Our Lord appeared to her often, usually as the Crucified Christ. Her simplicity caused her to feel that these apparitions were also granted to others who had recourse to Jesus in the sacrament of His love. When twenty-four years of age, Margaret entered the cloister. Our Lord entrusted to her the mission of establishing the reign of the Sacred Heart among the children of men. Criticism did not hamper her zeal, and her charity toward her opponents won them over to the cause of the Master. In the first revelation of the Sacred Heart to the nun, Our Lord made known His burning desire to be loved by all men, and His design of manifesting to them His Sacred Heart with its treasures of mercy. Margaret Mary communicated Our Lord's wish that the faithful receive Holy Communion on the first Friday of each month and observe the Feast of the Sacred Heart on the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi. After nineteen years in the convent, St. Margaret Mary died October 17, 1690. Many pilgrims to her tomb have sought and obtained favors. Through her apostolate of devotion to the Sacred Heart many sinners have repented and found grace with God.

About Saint Gerard Majella: St. Gerard was born in southern Italy on April 6, 1726. His father died while Gerard was still young, forcing him to be apprenticed to a tailor. His frail health, quiet disposition, and gentle ways led him to being bullied by fellow workers and by his employers. He was refused admission to the Capuchin Order on account of his youth, so he lived for a time as a hermit. His great love for Jesus crucified caused him to lead a very ascetical lifestyle. Getting to know the Redemptorists, he applied to them but was initially rejected because of his poor health. On his insisting, however, he was reluctantly accepted and sent to the novitiate with a note saying: "I am sending you a useless lay brother." Gerard was professed in July 1752, and quickly disproved the prediction of his uselessness by his excellent service as porter, tailor, and sacristan. His prayerfulness and dedication began to be too great to overlook and so he gained a reputation for sanctity. This brought a large number of persons to him for guidance in the spiritual life. He readily responded, revealing a remarkable gift for sensing the deep interior reality of a person. Because of this genius, of his ability to bring relief to the sick, and of his care for women in childbirth, many miracles were attributed to him and he gained the nickname "The Wonderworker." His popularity eventually led to accusations of sexual misconduct, which he bore patiently until they were proven false. He died on October 16, 1755, worn out by his austerities and by tuberculosis. Very many Catholics throughout the world honor him as the special patron of new mothers and of families, and his reputation as "The Wonderworker" continues to our day.

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