

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)

This is a last week of November – a month dedicated to praying for the souls in Purgatory.

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the holy souls in Purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the Universal Church, those in my own home and within my family. Amen. ~PRAYER OF SAINT GERTRUDE FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

Monday, November 23 ~ Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Clement I, Pope and Martyr; Saint Columban, Abbot;
Blessed Miguel Agustin Pro, Priest and Martyr

Holy Gospel: Luke 21:1-4 When Jesus looked up he saw some wealthy people putting their offerings into the treasury and he noticed a poor widow putting in two small coins. He said, “I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood.”

Meditation: Jesus teaches that real giving must come from the heart, because a gift given out of love, with a spirit of generosity and sacrifice, is precious. The amount or size of the gift doesn't matter as much as the cost to the giver. The poor widow could have kept one of her coins, but instead she recklessly gave away all she had! Jesus praised someone who gave barely equaled a penny because it was literally everything she had – her whole living – that she offered to God. What is your weekly Offertory on Sunday to God? On a percentage of income basis, is it truly a significant offering to God, given out of love for him and his son, Jesus Christ, and the Church he founded?

Prayer ~ Saint Clement I: Almighty ever-living God, who are wonderful in the virtue of all your Saints, grant us joy in the yearly commemoration of Saint Clement, who, as a Martyr and High Priest of your Son, bore out by his witness what he celebrated in mystery and confirmed by example what he preached with his lips. 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 Columban: O God, who in Saint Columban wonderfully joined the work of evangelization to zeal for the monastic life, grant, we pray, that through his intercession and example we may strive to seek you above all things and to bring increase to your faithful people. 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 Miguel Agustin Pro: Our God and Father, who conferred upon your servant Blessed Miguel Agustin Pro the grace of ardently seeking your greater glory and the salvation of others, grant, through his intercession and example, that by faithfully and joyfully performing our daily duties and effectively assisting those around us, we may serve you with zeal and ever seek your glory. 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: During the Mass the Offertory collection is really important. Whether we put in the “widow's mite” as today's Gospel refers or have the means to give much more, our financial contribution represents the gift of ourselves to God – literally my personal offering to God. As the Offertory brought forward at the presentation of the gifts, along with the bread and wine, our financial contribution serves as a sign of our self-offering. While the Bible speaks of tithing – and many Christian denominations insist on the 10 percent of income basis referenced in the Bible – the Catholic Church does not insist on tithing. But is your Offering to God a noteworthy amount given back to God out of love for him, his son Jesus Christ, and the Church that Jesus founded? If not, shouldn't it be? As Advent quickly approaches, and a new

Church Year begins, now is a good time to revisit the amount we give each Sunday through the Offertory during Mass so that it reflects more closely our love for God – our offering to him made in thanksgiving and love. Let us pray that each of us will give freely and generously in gratitude for all that God have given to us.

Tuesday, November 24 ~ Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Andrew Dung-Lac, Priest and Martyr, and Companions, Martyrs

Holy Gospel: Luke 21:5-11 While some people were speaking about how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings, Jesus said, "All that you see here – the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down." Then they asked him, "Teacher, when will this happen? And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?" He answered, "See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time has come.' Do not follow them! When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end." Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place; and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky."

Meditation: No doubt there have been many times throughout human history when people thought "this is it...these are the end times." World War II and the evils of the Nazis for one; the cold war era with the former Soviet Union and threat of nuclear war; our current times as well with the evil of ISIS and terrorism and wars taking place around the world. "Teacher, when will this happen..." is on the tips of many tongues today as it has been throughout human history. Of course Jesus says in scripture that we do not know the day nor the hour of his second coming, of the end times, but the important question is are you ready? As you read this, are you ready for the second coming of Christ? If you have an intimate, loving relationship with Christ and love him above all things then yes, you are probably ready. But we need to ask ourselves: When did I make my last confession? Have I done any works of mercy? Have I lived my life in witness to Christ and the teachings of his Catholic Church? Oops! Wow – that was a wake-up call. So after thinking about it, maybe you're not as ready as you originally thought, and perhaps your relationship with Christ is not what it should be. But there is no time like the present to undergo a radical conversion of mind and heart so that you are, in fact, living a life worthy to be called a disciple of Christ, and in a manner defined by sacred scripture, not the way of the world and the plethora of false prophets who pander teachings based on the "do whatever you want" attitudes of moral relativism. Be ready for him always and everyday – not out fear, but out of love of him, eager and ready to give an accounting of your life to Jesus at the throne of judgment.

Prayer: O God, source and origin of all fatherhood, who kept the Martyrs Saint Andrew Dung-Lac and his companions faith to the Cross of your Son, even to the shedding of their blood, grant through their intercession, that, spreading your love among our brothers and sisters, we may be your children both in name and in truth. 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: There are times when we don't fully recognize the moral crisis and spiritual conflict of the age in which we live, until something wakes us up to the reality of this present condition. God reminds us that a future judgment and outcome awaits every person, as each of us were created by God. The reward for doing what is right and good and pleasing to God – doing God's will – and the penalty for sinful rebellion and rejection of God are not always experienced in this present life, but this is sure to come the day of final judgment. The Lord Jesus tells us that there will be trials, suffering, and persecution in this present age until he comes again at the end of the world. God intends our anticipation of his final judgment to be a powerful deterrent to unfaithfulness and wrongdoing. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation Jesus extends grace and mercy to all who have a contrite heart, who recognize that we have strayed from following him and have sinned. Do not pass up, even for one day, the profound two word invitation of Jesus – "follow me" – and to receive his grace and mercy through a good confession. Remember, too, not to cling simply to human laws but instead to divine laws and teachings. Following the flawed human opinions of the U.S. Supreme Court justices will not get you to heaven; following the divine laws of God and faith and moral teachings of God's prophets and of his son, Jesus Christ, will get you to heaven. Learn to turn a deaf ear to anyone and anything (especially advocacy groups) that lead you astray from following our one Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, for they offer nothing and achieve nothing; Jesus offers a life of peace and love and eternal life with him.

Wednesday, November 25 ~ Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Catherine of Alexandria

Holy Gospel: Luke 21:12-19 Jesus said to the crowd: "They will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony. Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

Meditation: Jesus tells his disciples that if they endure to the end they will gain their lives - they will inherit abundant life and lasting happiness with God. And so endurance is an essential strength which God gives to those who place their hope and trust in him. Endurance is the patience which never gives up hope, never yields to despair or hatred. Patience is long-suffering because it looks beyond the present difficulties and trials and sees the reward which comes to those who persevere with hope and trust in God. That is why godly endurance is more than human effort. It is first and foremost a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit which enables us to bear up under any trial or temptation. Endurance is linked with godly hope - the supernatural assurance that we will see God face to face and inherit all the promises he has made. Jesus is our supreme model and pioneer who endured the cross for our sake (Hebrews 12:2). "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Jesus willingly shed his blood for us - to win for us pardon and peace with God. Our joy and privilege is to take up our cross each day to follow the Lord Jesus.

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, who gave Saint Catherine of Alexandria to your people as a Virgin and an invincible Martyr, grant that through her intercession we may be strengthened in faith and constancy and spend ourselves without reserve for the unity of the Church. 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: Have you ever wondered what attracts others to the truth and power of the Gospel? More often than not it is when they see Christians loving their enemies, being joyful in suffering, patient in adversity, pardoning injuries, and showing comfort and compassion to the hopeless and the helpless. And while "fear" is a very natural human emotion, Jesus tells us that we do not need to fear our adversaries because God will give us sufficient grace, strength, and wisdom to face any trial and to answer any challenge to our faith. Knowing this, are you ready to lay down your life for Christ and to bear witness to the joy and freedom of the Gospel?

Thursday, November 26 ~ Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time
~ Thanksgiving Day ~

Begin Thanksgiving Day by going to Mass and giving thanks to God.

Holy Gospel: Luke 17:11-19 As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten persons with leprosy met him. They stood at a distance from him and raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!" And when he saw them, he said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." As they were going they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."

Meditation: Today's gospel, translated and shortened into a news headline: "One out of ten people thank God." Think about this. When was the last time you paused and thanked God for *anything*? Sometimes in the busyness of our lives we simply expect God to give us certain things, but we never thank him. Today is a national holiday set aside to give thanks to God for everything. Everyday should be Thanksgiving Day for all of us - thanking God our Father, with love from his children. Never think you are "above" thanking God because you achieved everything on your own, attributing nothing to God - "enlightened" people often think this way. Thanking God is not a quaint thought or anything old fashioned - it is the right thing to do for all of the right reasons. I am reminded of a story. An old farmer once had a less-than-faithful relative visit him. After the farmer had bowed his head and thanked God for the food they were about to eat, the relative rudely said, "What did you do that for? There's no God. We live in an age of enlightenment." The old farmer smiled and said, "There is one on the farm who doesn't thank God before

he eats." The relative sat up and said, "Who is this enlightened one?" To which the farmer quietly replied, "My pig."

Prayer: Father all-powerful, your gifts of love are countless and your goodness infinite; as we come before you on Thanksgiving Day with gratitude for your kindness, open our hearts to have concern for every man, woman, and child, so that we may share your gifts in loving service. 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: Saying thank you to God should be part of our daily examen, part of our daily prayers, part of our spiritual life. Each of us has so much to be thankful for – and it all begins with God.

Friday, November 27 ~ Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 21:29-33 Jesus told his disciples a parable. "Consider the fig tree and all the other trees. When their buds burst open, you see for yourselves and know that summer is now near; in the same way, when you see these things happening, know that the Kingdom of God is near. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

Meditation: Jesus used the image of a fig tree to teach his disciples an important lesson about reading the "signs of the times." The fig tree was a common and important source of food for the Jews. It bore fruit twice a year, in the autumn and in the early spring. The Talmud (teachings and commentaries of the ancient rabbis on the Jewish Scriptures) said that the first fruit came the day after Passover. The Jews believed that when the Messiah came he would usher in the kingdom of God at Passover time. The early signs of a changing season, such as springtime, summer, or autumn, are evident for all who can see and observe the changes. Just so are the signs of God's kingdom and his return in glory on the day of judgment. The "budding" of God's kingdom begins first in the hearts of those who are receptive to God's word. Those who trust in God's word will bear the fruits of his kingdom. And what are the fruits of that kingdom? "The kingdom of God...is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). The Lord gives the first-fruits of his kingdom to those who open their hearts to him with expectant faith and trust in his word. We do not know the day nor the hour when the Lord Jesus will return again in glory. But the Lord does give us signs, not only to "wake us up" as a warning, but also to "rouse our spirits" to be ready and eager to receive his kingdom when he comes in all his power and glory. The "Day of the Lord" will strike terror in those who have ignored or rejected God, but it will be a day of joy and rejoicing for those who long to see the Lord face-to-face. The Lord Jesus wants us to be filled with joyful anticipation for his coming again.

Prayer: Stir up the will of your faithful, we pray, O Lord, that striving more eagerly to bring your divine work to fruitful completion, they may receive in greater measure the healing remedies your kindness bestows. 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: While we wait for the Lord's physical return in glory, we can know his presence with us through the work and action of the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts, and by our constant and ongoing communication with him in prayer. The Lord Jesus comes daily and frequently to those who long for him and he speaks tenderly to our hearts. He comes to show us the way to our heavenly Father and to give us the hope of eternal life. Listen to him so that you may embrace him and follow him – and do so with love.

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops;
prayers are from *The Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing, 2011;
information about saints, solemnities, feasts and memorials courtesy of Catholic Culture.

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*The new Liturgical Year commences with the First Sunday of Advent, November 29.
In this new liturgical year, the Church not only wishes to indicate the beginning of a period,
but the beginning of a renewed commitment to the faith by all those who follow Christ, our Lord
and Savior. This time of prayer and path of penance is so powerful, so rich and intense, that it
endeavors to give us a renewed impetus to truly welcome the message of Christ our Savior.*

