

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 is dedicated to the 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 11 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time Saint John XXIII, Pope

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: Almighty and eternal God, who in the Pope, Saint John XXIII, gave to the whole world the shining example of a good shepherd, grant that, through his intercession, we may with joy spread abroad the fullness of Christian charity. 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: 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 12 ~ 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, 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 13 ~ Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time

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 50 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. They put unnecessary burdens on others while neglecting to show charity, especially to the weak and the poor. They meticulously went through the correct motions of conventional religion while forgetting the realities.

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

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

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 insincerity and hypocrisy in our lives.

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, God, for ever and ever. 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?

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

Holy Gospel: Luke 12:8-12 Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God. But whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God. Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. When they take you before synagogues and before rulers and authorities, do not worry about how or what your defense will be or about what you are to say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say."

Meditation: There are no limits to the mercy of God, but we can reject his mercy by refusing to ask God's pardon for our wrongdoing and by refusing to accept the help he gives us to turn away from sin and from whatever would keep us from doing his will. God gives sufficient grace (his favor and mercy towards us) and he gives sufficient help (his wisdom and strength) to all who humbly call upon him. God never turns a deaf ear to those who seek his help and listen to his words of hope, of pardon, and of deliverance.

Prayer: 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, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer ~ Saint Gerard Majella: 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: Among the many Letters of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, who helped to firmly establish the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, this excerpt is worth contemplating in relation to today's Gospel: "The adorable Heart of Jesus wishes to establish His reign of love in the hearts of all, to destroy and bring to ruin the kingdom of Satan. It seems to me He has so great a desire of doing this that He promises great rewards to men of good will who work for it with all their heart according to the strength and lights He gives them. Do not be afraid, then, of the difficulties and sufferings you will have to put up with in this holy undertaking. Rather we ought to think ourselves fortunate that He considers us worthy to work for so noble a cause. Yes, I say we ought to be willing to bear every kind of trial, contradiction, calumny, and suffering. The more of these I find the more encouraged I feel and the greater is my hope that this enterprise will succeed for the glory of this lovable Heart and the salvation of many souls. But this is the kind of devotion that cannot be forced or imposed on anyone. It is enough to make it known and then leave to this divine Heart the work of entering the souls He has prepared by His grace. Fortunate indeed are these. We must love this divine Heart, beloved Sister, in such a way that we no longer live except for Him and through Him." (*Letter to Sister Jeanne-Madeline Joly, April 10, 1690*)

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