

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 when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received - only what you have given: a full heart, enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice and courage.” ~SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

**Monday, October 4 ~ Twenty-Seventh Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Francis of Assisi, Religious; Founder of the Franciscan Order**

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: Jesus' story enlightens us about true love for one's neighbor. Above all, we must be willing to help even if others brought trouble on themselves through their own fault or negligence. Our love and concern to help others in need must also be practical; good intentions and showing pity, or empathizing with others, is not enough. Also, our love for others must be as wide and as inclusive as God's love, remembering that 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 each of us.

Prayer: O God, by whose gift Saint Francis was conformed to Christ in poverty and humility, grant that, by walking in Francis' footsteps, we may follow your Son, and, through joyful charity, come to be united with you. 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 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. Jesus truly identified with our plight, and he took the burden of our sinful condition upon himself. He showed us the depths of God's love and compassion, by sharing in our suffering and by offering his life as an atoning sacrifice for our sins upon the cross. His suffering is redemptive because it brings us healing and restoration and the fullness of eternal life. God offers us true freedom from every form of oppression, sin, and suffering. And that way – the only way – is through the cross of Jesus Christ.

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

Holy Gospel: Luke 10:38-42 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: 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 (ref. 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" (ref. Col. 3:17). When you sit, eat, sleep and when you entertain your friends and guests, remember that the Lord Jesus is also the guest of your home. Scripture tells us that when Abraham opened his home and welcomed three unknown travelers, he welcomed the Lord who blessed him favorably for his gracious hospitality (ref. Genesis 18:1-10; Heb. 13:2). The Lord wants us to bring him glory in the way we treat others and use the gifts he has graciously given to us. God, in turn, blesses us with his gracious presence and fills us with joy.

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, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Our Lord taught Saint Faustina Kowalska a prayer for mercy that she was to pray unceasingly: **The Chaplet of the Divine Mercy**. He told her that, if she prayed in this way, her prayers would have great power for the conversion of sinners, for peace for the dying, and even for controlling nature (*Diary*, 687, 811, 1731, 1791). We, too, can pray this chaplet, using ordinary rosary beads of five decades. We begin with the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Apostles Creed. Then on the large beads we pray: Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world. On the small beads we pray: For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world. And at the end, we pray three times: Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world. (*Diary*, 476). As we seek God's love and mercy, let us also mirror Christ's love for others in our own lives.

Wednesday, October 6 ~ Twenty-Seventh Week in Ordinary Time Saint Bruno, Priest; Blessed Marie Rose Durocher, Virgin

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:1-4 Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your Kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, and do not subject us to the final test."

Meditation: Jesus teaches us to address God as "our Father" and to confidently ask him for the things we need to live as his sons and daughters. We can approach God our Father with confidence and boldness because Jesus Christ has opened the way to heaven for us through his death and resurrection. When we ask God for help, he fortunately does not give us what we deserve. Instead, he responds with grace and mercy. He is kind and forgiving towards us and he expects us to treat our neighbor the same. We can pray with expectant faith because our heavenly Father truly loves each one of us and he treats us as his beloved children. He delights to give us what is good. His love and grace transforms us and makes us like himself. Through his grace and power we can love and serve one another as Jesus taught -- with grace, mercy, and loving kindness.

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, 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, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: When Jesus taught his disciples to pray he gave them the disciple's prayer, what we call the Our Father or Lord's Prayer. What does Jesus' prayer tell us about God and about ourselves? First, it tells us that God is both Father in being the Creator and Author of all that he has made, the first origin of everything and transcendent authority, and he is eternally Father by his relationship to his only Son who, reciprocally is Son only in relation to his Father (ref. Matthew 11:27). All fatherhood and motherhood is derived from him (ref. Ephesians 3:14-15). In Jesus Christ we are reborn and become the adopted children of God (ref. John 1:12-13; 3:3). Do you treat others as they deserve, or do you treat them as the Lord would with grace and mercy? Jesus' prayer includes an injunction that we must ask God to forgive us in proportion as we forgive those who have wronged us. God's grace frees us from every form of anger, spite, resentment, and hatred. Are you ready to forgive others just as Jesus forgives you?

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

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: Notice how 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 inhospitality.

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, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: If a neighbor can be imposed upon and coerced into giving bread in the middle of the night, how much more hospitable is God (who, no matter what the circumstances) is generous and gracious to give us what we need 24/7/365? In conclusion Jesus makes a startling claim: How much more will the heavenly Father give! The Lord is ever ready to give us not only what we need, but more than we can expect. He gives freely of his Holy Spirit that we may share in his life and joy. Do you approach your heavenly Father with confidence in his mercy and kindness?

An Additional Contemplation ~ Pope Benedict XVI on the Rosary: "The Rosary is a school of contemplation and silence. At first glance, it could seem a prayer that accumulates words, therefore difficult to reconcile with the silence that is rightly recommended for meditation and contemplation. In fact, this cadent repetition of the Hail Mary does not disturb inner silence but indeed both demands and nourishes it. Similarly to what happens for the Psalms when one prays the Liturgy of the Hours, the silence surfaces through the words and sentences, not as emptiness, but rather as the presence of an ultimate meaning that transcends the words themselves and through them speaks to the heart. Thus, in reciting the Hail Mary, we must be careful that our voices do not "cover" the voice of God who always speaks through the silence like the "still small voice" of a gentle breeze (1 Kings 19: 12). Then how important it is to foster this silence full of God, both in one's personal recitation and in its recitation with the community! Even when the Rosary is prayed, as today, by great assemblies, and as you do in this

Shrine every day, it must be perceived as a contemplative prayer. And this cannot happen without an atmosphere of inner silence." (From a reflection on the Rosary given in Pompeii on October 19, 2008)

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

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: You might be wondering what the point is of Jesus' story about a vacant house being occupied by an evil force? Simply that it is not enough to banish evil thoughts and habits from our lives. We must also fill the voids in our lives – "empty time" if you will – with God who is the source of all that is good, wholesome, true, and life-giving for us. Saint Augustine said that our lives have a God-shaped void which only God can fill satisfactorily. If we attempt to leave it vacant or to fill it with something else, we will end up being in a worse state in the end. What do you fill the void in your life with? The Lord Jesus wants to fill our hearts and minds with the power of his life-giving word and healing love. Jesus makes it very clear that there are no neutral parties in this world. We are either for Jesus or against him, for the kingdom of God or against it. There are ultimately only two kingdoms which stand in opposition to one another – the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness which is under the rule of Satan. If we disobey God's word, we open the door to the power of sin and Satan. If we want to live in true freedom, then our "house" (the inner core of our own true being) must be occupied by Jesus where he is enthroned as Lord and Savior. The Lord assures us of his protection from spiritual harm and he gives us the help and strength we need to resist Satan and his lies (ref. James 4:7).

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, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: When we experience danger in our lives, what kind of protection do you seek? 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 (ref. John 8:34). 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 (ref. 1 Peter 5:8-9). Scripture identifies the Evil One by many names – "Satan," "Be-el'zebul—the prince of demons," the "Devil," the "Deceiver," the "Father of Lies," and "Lucifer" the fallen angel who broke ranks 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 (ref. 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 (ref. Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:1). He overcame the Evil One through his obedience to the will of his Father; your obedience to God's will can achieve the same triumph over Satan and all that is evil.

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