

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 November is dedicated to the Holy 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 HOLY SOULS IN PURGATORY

For information about gaining a Plenary Indulgence for the souls in Purgatory, visit:

<https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/all-souls-octave-and-novembers-dedication-to-holy-souls/>

Monday, November 3 ~ Thirty-First Week in Ordinary Time **Octave of All Souls + Saint Martin de Porres, Religious**

Holy Gospel: Luke 14:12-14 On a Sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees. He said to the host who invited him, "When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or sisters or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Meditation: The Lord is always ready to receive us at his table. As far as we can tell from the gospel accounts, Jesus never refused a dinner invitation! Why, in this particular instance, does Jesus lecture his host on who he should or shouldn't invite to dinner? Did his host expect some favor or reward from Jesus? Did he want to impress his neighbors with the honor of hosting the "miracle worker" from Galilee?

Prayer: O God, who led Saint Martin de Porres by the path of humility to heavenly glory, grant that we may so follow his radiant example in this life as to merit to be exalted with him in heaven. 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 probes our hearts as well. Do you show favor and generosity to those who will repay you in kind? What about those who do not have the means to repay you – the poor, the sick, and the disadvantaged? Generosity demands a measure of self-sacrifice. It doesn't impoverish, but rather enriches the soul of the giver. True generosity springs from a heart full of mercy and compassion. God loved us first, and our love is a response of gratitude to his great mercy and kindness towards us. We cannot out give God in his generosity towards us. Do you give freely as Jesus gives without expectation for personal gain or reward?

Tuesday, November 4 ~ Thirty-First Week in Ordinary Time **Octave of All Souls + Saint Charles Borromeo, Bishop** **~ Election Day ~**

Holy Gospel: Luke 14:15-24 One of those at table with Jesus said to him, "Blessed is the one who will dine in the Kingdom of God." He replied to him, "A man gave a great dinner to which he invited many. When the time for the dinner came, he dispatched his servant to say to those invited, 'Come, everything is now ready.' But one by one, they all began to excuse themselves. The first said to him, 'I have purchased a field and must go to examine it; I ask you, consider me excused.' And another said, 'I have purchased five yoke of oxen and am on my way to evaluate them; I ask you, consider me excused.' And another said, 'I have just married a woman, and therefore I cannot come.' The servant went and reported this to his master. Then the master of the house in a rage commanded his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in here the poor and the crippled, the blind and the lame.' The servant reported, 'Sir, your orders have been carried out and still there is room.' The master then ordered

the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedgerows and make people come in that my home may be filled. For, I tell you, none of those men who were invited will taste my dinner.'"

Meditation: What does it mean to "eat bread in the kingdom of heaven?" In the ancient world the most notable sign of favor and intimate friendship was the invitation to "share bread" at the dinner table. Who you ate with showed who you valued and trusted as your friends. A great banquet would involve a lavish meal of several courses and a large company of notable guests and friends. One of the most beautiful images of heaven in the scriptures is the royal wedding celebration and banquet given by the King for his son and close friends. We, in fact, have been invited to the most important banquet of all! The last book in the Bible ends with an invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb and his Bride, the Church: The Spirit and the Bride say, Come! (Revelations 22:17). The 'Lamb of God' is the Lord Jesus Christ and his bride is the people he has redeemed by his own precious blood which was shed upon the cross for our salvation.

Prayer: Preserve in the midst of your people, we ask, O Lord, the spirit with which you filled the Bishop Saint Charles Borromeo, that your Church may be constantly renewed and, by conforming herself to the likeness of Christ, may show his face to the world. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer Before an Election: Lord God, as the election approaches, we seek to better understand the issues and concerns that confront our city/state/country, and how the Gospel compels us to respond as faithful citizens in our community. We ask for eyes that are free from blindness so that we might see each other as brothers and sisters, one and equal in dignity, especially those who are victims of abuse and violence, deceit and poverty. We ask for ears that will hear the cries of children unborn and those abandoned, Men and women oppressed because of race or creed, religion or gender. We ask for minds and hearts that are open to hearing the voice of leaders who will bring us closer to your Kingdom. We pray for discernment so that we may choose leaders who hear your Word, live your love, and keep in the ways of your truth as they follow in the steps of Jesus and his Apostles and guide us to your Kingdom of justice and peace. We pray this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

An Election Day Prayer: Gracious and loving God, let your Spirit be with us (me) today. Hear our (my) prayers, and increase in us (me) the will to follow your Son Jesus. Help us (me) to draw on the resources of our (my) faith as we (I) use the opportunities of our democracy to shape a society more respectful of the life, dignity, and rights of the human person, especially the poor and vulnerable. We (I) ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Notice how Jesus probes the reasons why people make excuses to God's great invitation to "eat bread" with him at his banquet table. The first excuse allows the claims of one's personal business or work to take precedence over God's claim. Do you allow any task or endeavor to absorb you so much that it keeps you from the thought of God? The second excuse allows our possessions to come before God. Do you allow the media and other diversions to crowd out time for God in daily prayer and worship? The third excuse puts home and family ahead of God. God never meant for our home and relationships to be used selfishly. We serve God best when we invite him into our work, our homes, and our personal lives and when we share our possessions with others. Do you make excuses to God's great invitation to "eat bread" with him at his banquet table?

Wednesday, November 5 ~ Thirty-First Week in Ordinary Time Octave of All Souls

Holy Gospel: Luke 14:25-33 Great crowds were traveling with Jesus, and he turned and addressed them, "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him and say, 'This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.' Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. In the same way, everyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple."

Meditation: What does the parable of the tower builder and a ruler on a war campaign have in common? Both risk serious loss if they don't carefully plan ahead. In a shame and honor culture people want to

avoid at all costs being mocked by their community for failing to complete a task they began in earnest. This double parable echoes the instruction of Proverbs: "By wisdom a house is built" and "by wise guidance you can wage a war" to ensure victory (Proverbs 24:3-6). Every landowner who could afford it walled in his orchard as a protection from intruders who might steal or harm his produce. A tower was usually built in a corner of the wall and a guard posted especially during harvest time when thieves would likely try to make off with the goods. Starting a building-project, and leaving it unfinished because of poor planning would invite the scorn of the whole village. Likewise a king who decided to wage a war against an opponent who was much stronger, would be considered foolish if he did not come up with a plan that had a decent chance of success. Jesus tells his would-be disciples that they, too, must count the cost if they want to succeed as his disciples. Jesus assures success for those willing to pay the price. All it cost is everything! What does Jesus have to offer that's worth giving up everything else? More than we can imagine! Jesus offers the gift of abundant life and everlasting peace and happiness with God.

Prayer: Almighty and merciful God, by whose gift your faithful offer you right and praiseworthy service, grant, we pray, that we may hasten without stumbling to receive the things you have promised. 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 used strong language to make clear that nothing should take precedence or first place in our lives over God. Jesus knew that the way of the cross was the Father's way to glory and victory over sin and death. He counted the cost and said "yes" to his Father's will. We, too, must "count the cost" and be ready to follow Jesus in the way of the cross if we want to share in his glory and victory. What is the "way of the cross" for you and for me? When my will crosses with God's will, then his will must be done. The way of the cross involves sacrifice, the sacrifice of laying down my life each and every day for Jesus' sake. What makes such sacrifice possible and "sweet" for us is the love of God poured out for us in the blood of Jesus Christ. Paul the Apostle reminds us that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5). We can never out give God. He always gives us more than we can expect or imagine. Do you allow the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with the love of God? If not, what crust has built up around your heart that you need to get rid of?

Thursday, November 6 ~ Thirty-First Week in Ordinary Time Octave of All Souls

Holy Gospel: Luke 15:1-10 The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So Jesus addressed this parable to them. "What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance. "Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.' In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Meditation: What does Jesus' story about a lost sheep and a lost coin tell us about God and his kingdom? Shepherds normally counted their sheep at the end of the day to make sure all were accounted for. Since sheep by their very nature are very social, an isolated sheep can quickly become bewildered and even neurotic. The shepherd's grief and anxiety is turned to joy when he finds the lost sheep and restores it to the fold. The housewife who lost a coin faced something of an economic disaster, since the value of the coin would be equivalent to her husband's daily wage. What would she say to her husband when he returned home from work? They were poor and would suffer greatly because of the loss. Her grief and anxiety turn to joy when she finds the coin. Both the shepherd and the housewife "search until what they have lost is found." Their persistence pays off. They both instinctively share their joy with the whole community. The poor are particularly good at sharing in one another's sorrows and joys. What was new in Jesus' teaching was the insistence that sinners must be sought out and not merely mourned for. God does not rejoice in the loss of anyone, but desires that all be saved and restored to fellowship with him. That is why the whole community of heaven rejoices when one sinner is found and reconciled with God.

Prayer: Almighty and merciful God, by whose gift your faithful offer you right and praiseworthy service, grant, we pray, that we may hasten without stumbling to receive the things you have promised. 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: Do you ever feel resentful or get upset when someone else gets an unearned favor or gets treated better than you think they deserve? The scribes and Pharisees took great offense at Jesus because he went out of his way to meet with sinners and he treated them graciously like they were his friends. The Pharisees had strict regulations about how they were to keep away from sinners, lest they incur ritual defilement. They were not to entrust money to them or have any business dealings with them, nor trust them with a secret, nor entrust orphans to their care, nor accompany them on a journey, nor give their daughter in marriage to any of their sons, nor invite them as guests or be their guests. They were shocked with the way in which Jesus freely received sinners and ate with them. Sinners, nonetheless, were drawn to Jesus to hear him speak about the mercy of God. Are you drawn to Jesus in the same way?

Friday, November 7 ~ Thirty-First Week in Ordinary Time Octave of All Souls

Holy Gospel: Luke 16:1-8 Jesus said to his disciples, "A rich man had a steward who was reported to him for squandering his property. He summoned him and said, 'What is this I hear about you? Prepare a full account of your stewardship, because you can no longer be my steward.' The steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, now that my master is taking the position of steward away from me? I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do so that, when I am removed from the stewardship, they may welcome me into their homes.' He called in his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, 'How much do you owe my master?' He replied, 'One hundred measures of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Here is your promissory note. Sit down and quickly write one for fifty.' Then to another he said, 'And you, how much do you owe?' He replied, 'One hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Here is your promissory note; write one for eighty.' And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently. For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than the children of light."

Meditation: What is the point of Jesus' parable? The dishonest steward is commended not for mishandling his master's wealth, but for his shrewd provision in averting personal disaster and in securing his future livelihood. The original meaning of "shrewdness" is "foresight." A shrewd person grasps a critical situation with resolution, foresight, and the determination to avoid serious loss or disaster. Jesus is concerned here with something more critical than a financial or economic crisis. His concern is that we avert spiritual crisis and personal moral disaster through the exercise of faith and foresight. If Christians would only expend as much foresight and energy to spiritual matters which have eternal consequences as much as they do to earthly matters which have temporal consequences, then they would be truly better off, both in this life and in the age to come.

Prayer: Almighty and merciful God, by whose gift your faithful offer you right and praiseworthy service, grant, we pray, that we may hasten without stumbling to receive the things you have promised. 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: True wealth consists not in what we keep but in what we give away. Possessions are a great responsibility. The Lord expects us to use them honestly and responsibly and to put them at his service and the service of others. We belong to God and all that we have is his as well. He expects us to make a good return on what he gives us. God loves generosity and he gives liberally to those who share his gifts with others. The Pharisees, however, had no room for God or others in their hearts. The gospel says they were lovers of money (Luke 16:14). Love of money and wealth crowd out love of God and love of neighbor. Jesus makes clear that our hearts must either be possessed by God's love or our hearts will be possessed by the love of something else. What do you most treasure in your heart?

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops;
prayers are from *The Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing, 2011;
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