

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

“The Rosary is a powerful weapon in our hands. It not only strengthens us in our personal struggles but also calls down heavenly help for the whole world. Each bead is a step towards the Heart of Jesus through the Heart of Mary. Never be ashamed to carry your Rosary or to pray it wherever you are — for through it, you hold the key to countless graces and the sure protection of the Immaculata, who crushes the head of the serpent.” +SAINT MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

Monday, October 27 ~ Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 13:10-17 Jesus was teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath. And a woman was there who for eighteen years had been crippled by a spirit; she was bent over, completely incapable of standing erect. When Jesus saw her, he called to her and said, “Woman, you are set free of your infirmity.” He laid his hands on her, and she at once stood up straight and glorified God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant that Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, said to the crowd in reply, “There are six days when work should be done. Come on those days to be cured, not on the Sabbath day.” The Lord said to him in reply, “Hypocrites! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger and lead it out for watering? This daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years now, ought she not to have been set free on the Sabbath day from this bondage?” When he said this, all his adversaries were humiliated; and the whole crowd rejoiced at all the splendid deeds done by him.

Meditation: There are a plethora of things that, at times, can keep any of us bound up or oppressed – especially physical, emotional, or spiritual infirmities, which can befall us. Notice that when Jesus encountered an elderly woman who was spent of her strength and unable to stand upright, he gave her words of faith and freedom and he restored her to health. She must have suffered much, both physically and spiritually for eighteen years, since Jesus remarked that Satan had bound her. How can Satan do this? The scriptures indicate that Satan can act in the world with malice and can cause injuries of a spiritual nature, and indirectly even of a physical nature. Satan's power, however, is not infinite. He cannot prevent the building up of God's kingdom or reign in our lives. Jesus demonstrates the power and authority of God's kingdom in releasing people who are oppressed by physical and emotional sickness, by personal weakness and sin, and by the harassment of the evil one in their lives. It took only one word from Jesus to release this woman instantly of her infirmity. Do you believe in the power of Jesus to release you from affliction and oppression?

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, increase our faith, hope and charity, and make us love what you command, so that we may merit what you promise. 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 Jewish leaders were indignant that Jesus would perform such a miraculous work on the Sabbath, the holy day of rest. They were so caught up in their ritual observance of the Sabbath that they lost sight of God's mercy and goodness. Jesus healed on the Sabbath because God does not rest from showing his mercy and love, ever. God's word has power to change us, spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Is there anything that keeps you bound up or that weighs you down? Let the Lord speak his word to you and give you freedom.

Tuesday, October 28 ~ Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time **Feast of Saints Simon and Jude, Apostles**

Holy Gospel: Luke 6:12-16 Jesus went up to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also

named Apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called a Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Meditation: In choosing the 12 Apostles, we see a characteristic feature of God's work – Jesus chose very ordinary people, from everyday walks of life. Sinners all, they were non-professionals, who had no wealth or position. They were chosen from the common people who did ordinary things, had no special education, and no social advantages. Jesus wanted ordinary people who could take an assignment and do it extraordinarily well. He chose these men, not for what they were, but for what they would be capable of becoming under his direction and power. When the Lord calls us to serve, we must not shrug back because we think that we have little or nothing to offer. The Lord takes what ordinary people, like us, can offer and uses it for greatness in his kingdom.

Prayer: O God, who by the blessed Apostles have brought us to acknowledge your name, graciously grant, through the intercession of Saints Simon and Jude, that the Church may constantly grow by increase of the peoples who believe in 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: What is God's call to you? And are you responding to God's call? Just as Jesus called the 12 Apostles in various ways to "Come, follow me..." Jesus extends this same invitation to each one of us, to share in his mission, to live our lives according to the laws of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ. We, too, are ordinary, everyday people, all capable of achieving many things – great and small – as Christ's followers, as his disciples. What's holding you back from giving yourself entirely over to God? Are you ready to respond to Jesus' invitation of "Come, follow me..." or is something holding you back?

Wednesday, October 29 ~ Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 13:22-30 Jesus passed through towns and villages, teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough. After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, then will you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply, 'I do not know where you are from.' And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' Then he will say to you, 'I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!' And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out. And people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the Kingdom of God. For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

Meditation: What does the image of a door say to us about the kingdom of God? Jesus' story about the door being shut to those who come too late suggests they had offended their host and deserved to be excluded. It was customary for teachers in Jesus' time to close the door on tardy students and not allow them back for a whole week in order to teach them a lesson in discipline and faithfulness. Jesus told this story in response to the question of who will make it to heaven. Many rabbis held that all Israel would be saved, except for a few blatant sinners who excluded themselves! After all, they were specially chosen by God when he established a covenant with them. Jesus doesn't directly answer the question, however; but his response is nonetheless unsettling on two counts. First, Jesus surprised his listeners by saying that one's membership as a covenanted people does not automatically mean entry into the kingdom of God. Second, Jesus asserts that many from the gentile nations would enter God's kingdom. God's invitation is open to Jew and Gentile alike. But Jesus warns that we can be excluded if we do not strive to enter by the narrow door. What did Jesus mean by this expression? The door which Jesus had in mind was himself. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved (John 10:9). Through the cross Jesus opens the way for us to enter into his kingdom. But we must follow Jesus in the way of the cross. The word strive can also be translated agony. To enter the kingdom of God one must struggle against the forces of temptation and whatever would hinder us from doing the will of God (even apathy, indifference, and compromise).

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, increase our faith, hope and charity, and make us love what you command, so that we may merit what you promise. 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 last thing we ever want to hear Jesus say to us is "I do not know where you are from...depart from me you evil doer." Like any relationship, we need to develop a relationship with Jesus Christ so that we give him all due reverence, love and respect as our Lord and Savior. The best way we

can show Jesus that we revere Him and love Him is to follow Him wherever He leads us. By clinging to His side, by doing what He asks of us, by following the will of God, we can be assured of eternal life with Him. Do you love Jesus enough to follow Him where He wants to lead you? Do you allow Jesus to shepherd you? If not, why not?

Thursday, October 30 ~ Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 13:31-35 Some Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "Go away, leave this area because Herod wants to kill you." He replied, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and I perform healings today and tomorrow, and on the third day I accomplish my purpose. Yet I must continue on my way today, tomorrow, and the following day, for it is impossible that a prophet should die outside of Jerusalem.' "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were unwilling! Behold, your house will be abandoned. But I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*"

Meditation: Jesus compares his longing for Jerusalem with a mother hen gathering her brood under her protective wings. Psalm 91 speaks of God's protection in such terms: "He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge" (Psalm 91:4). Jesus willingly set his face toward Jerusalem, knowing that he would meet certain betrayal, rejection, and death on a cross. His death on the cross, however, brought about victory and salvation, not only for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but for all – both Jew and Gentile – who would accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Jesus' prophecy is a two-edged sword, pointing to his victory over sin and death and foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and the dire consequences for all who would reject him and his saving message. While the destruction of Jerusalem's temple was determined (it was razed by the Romans in 70 A.D.) there remained for its inhabitants a narrow open door leading to deliverance. Jesus says: I am the door; whoever enters by me will be saved (ref. John 10:9). The Lord Jesus opens the way for each of us to have direct access to God who adopts us as his children and who makes his home with us.

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, increase our faith, hope and charity, and make us love what you command, so that we may merit what you promise. 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 make room in your life for Jesus Christ? The Lord is knocking at the door of your heart (ref. Revelations 3:20) and he wishes to enter into a close personal relationship with you. Receive him who is the giver of expectant faith, unwavering hope, and undying love. And long for the true home which God has prepared for you in his heavenly city, Jerusalem (ref. Revelations 21:2-4). Think about it: why would anyone not want to enter into a close personal relationship with Christ?

Friday, October 31 ~ Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 14:1-6 On a Sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully. In front of him there was a man suffering from dropsy. Jesus spoke to the scholars of the law and Pharisees in reply, asking, "Is it lawful to cure on the Sabbath or not?" But they kept silent; so he took the man and, after he had healed him, dismissed him. Then he said to them "Who among you, if your son or ox falls into a cistern, would not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" But they were unable to answer his question.

Meditation: Jesus already knew that his hosts wanted to catch him in the act of breaking their Sabbath rituals. So when Jesus gave his defense for healing on the Sabbath, they treated him with cold silence. They were ensnared in their own legalism and could not understand or see the purpose of God in allowing a work of healing to take precedence over rest. Why did God give the commandment to keep holy the Sabbath and enjoined his people to refrain from work on that day? The "Sabbath rest" was meant to be a time to remember and celebrate God's goodness and the goodness of his works, both in creation and redemption. It was a day set apart for the praise of God, his work of creation, and his saving actions on our behalf. It was intended to bring everyday work to a halt and to provide needed rest and refreshment. It was not, however, intended to put a stop to love of God and love of neighbor. The law of love supersedes the law of rest! Jesus shows the fallacy of the Pharisees' legalism by pointing to God's intention for the Sabbath: to do good and to heal. God's word has power to heal and to set us free from ignorance, error, intolerance, and prejudice.

Prayer: Almighty and ever-living God, our source of power and inspiration, give us strength and joy in serving you as followers of Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Time is a precious commodity in all of our lives. But increasingly Sunday – the Lord’s Day – is becoming just another day of the week. In his Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*, “The Day of the Lord,” Pope Saint John Paul II invited us to think more deeply about time itself in order to appreciate God’s gift of the Lord’s Day. He writes (in #7), “Do not be afraid to give your time to Christ! ...He is the One who knows the secret of time and the secret of eternity, and He gives us ‘His day’ as an ever new gift of His love. The rediscovery of this day is a grace which we must implore, not only so that we may live the demands of faith to the full, but also so that we may respond concretely to the deepest human yearnings. Time given to Christ is never time lost, but is rather time gained, so that our relationships and indeed our whole life may become more profoundly human.”

Saturday, November 1 ~ Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time Solemnity of All Saints

Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12a When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”

Meditation: The beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness that God has placed in every heart. They teach us the final end to which God calls us, namely the coming of God's kingdom (Matthew 4:17), the vision of God (Matthew 5:8; 1 John 2; 1), entering into the joy of the Lord (Matthew 25:21-23) and into his rest (Hebrews 4:7-11). Jesus' beatitudes also confront us with decisive choices concerning the life we pursue here on earth and the use we make of the goods he puts at our disposal. God alone satisfies. Theresa of Avila's prayer book contained a bookmark which she wrote: "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; all things pass: God never changes. Patience achieves all it strives for. Whoever has God lacks nothing, God alone suffices." Is God enough for you? God offers us the greatest good possible – abundant life in Jesus Christ (John 10:10) and the promise of unending joy and happiness with God. Do you seek the highest good, the total good, which is above all else?

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, by whose gift we venerate in one celebration the merits of all the Saints, bestow on us, we pray, through the prayers of so many intercessors, an abundance of the reconciliation with you for which we earnestly long. 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 the good life which God intends for us? And how is it related with the ultimate end or purpose of life? Is it not our desire and longing for true happiness, which is none other than the complete good, the sum of all goods, leaving nothing more to be desired? Jesus addresses this question in his sermon on the mount. The heart of Jesus' message is that we can live a very happy life. The call to holiness, to be saints who joyfully pursue God's will for their lives, can be found in these ten beatitudes. Jesus' beatitudes sum up our calling or vocation – to live a life of the beatitudes. The word “beatitude” literally means “happiness” or “blessedness.” Living a life of Christ will bring us true joy, true happiness – everything else of this world is fleeting.

*The Month of November is Dedicated to the Holy Souls;
today is Day One of the All Souls Octave + November 1-8.
For information about this Octave and the opportunity
to gain plenary indulgences for the Souls in Purgatory, visit:
<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?id=3888>*

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 the Catholic Culture web site.

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