

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 June is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

The Month of July is dedicated to the Precious Blood of Jesus

"Today, therefore, my final prayer is this: that God will bless America, so that she may increasingly become — and truly be — and long remain one Nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all." +POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II (1979 VISIT TO U.S.)

Monday, June 29 ~ Thirteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles

Holy Gospel: Matthew 13:16-19 When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Meditation: Today the Apostles Peter and Paul are commemorated for tirelessly working for the spread of the gospel, not only to the people of Israel, but to all the nations as well. They risked their lives in the process and gladly poured out their blood in loyalty to their Master, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As Paul so eloquently stated in his second epistle to Timothy: "they courageously fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). So it is worth asking: How firm is your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Prayer: Grant, we pray, O Lord our God, that we may be sustained by the intercession of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, that, as through them you gave your Church the foundations of her heavenly office, so through them you may help her to eternal salvation. 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 asks: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" he poses that question to each of us. Our response is twofold – first by our *words*, and second by our *actions* – the way we live our lives. We can proclaim Christ as our Lord and Savior, and share in his saving mission through word by sharing the message found in sacred scripture. But most important is to put the teachings of sacred scripture into action and "living" the word fully in our daily lives. If we are firm in our faith, this is something that occurs naturally. If we find ourselves hesitating out of "fear" or "embarrassment" then there is work to be done in making sure that when we proclaim to be a Catholic, a Christian, a disciple of Christ, that we mean what we say and say what we mean. Let's not insult Jesus with lip service – profess to be one thing and then do another – let's prove to him and to the world that we are true disciples by living the Word day in and day out, and that this desire comes from our hearts to be authentic disciples.

Tuesday, June 30 ~ Thirteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time First Martyrs of the Church of Rome

Holy Gospel: Matthew 8:23-27 As Jesus got into a boat, his disciples followed him. Suddenly a violent storm came up on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by waves; but he was asleep. They came and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" He said to them, "Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?" Then he got up, rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm. The men were amazed and said, "What sort of man is this, whom even the winds and the sea obey?"

Meditation: What is stronger than fear, even the fear of death? Scripture gives an answer: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). The Wisdom of Solomon tells us that "love is

stronger than death" (Song of Songs 8:6). Jesus' sleeping presence on the storm-tossed sea reveals the sleeping faith of his disciples. They feared for their lives even though their Lord and Master was with them in the boat. They were asleep to Christ while he was present to them in their hour of need.

Prayer: O God, who consecrated that abundant first fruits of the Roman Church by the blood of the Martyrs, grant, we pray, that with firm courage we may together draw strength from so great a struggle and ever rejoice at the triumph of faithful love. 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: Wherever the Good News of Jesus was preached, it met the same opposition as Jesus did, and many of those who began to follow him shared his suffering and death. But no human force could stop the power of the Spirit unleashed upon the world. The blood of martyrs has always been, and will always be, the seed of Christians. Jesus is always present to us in our hour of need – especially in times of challenge, fear, and anxiety. Jesus was there for the first martyrs of Rome in their persecution in living out the teachings of Christ, just as he is present to us as we bring the teachings of Christ into our world – into our homes, our places of work, our schools, in our neighborhoods. The truth of Christ always prevails and flourishes, while dictators, fads, people and activist groups with their own personal agendas and other secular things wither like a dead tree limb. Never be afraid to promote and live the truths of Christ, and to live your life of faith to the fullest, no matter what opposition you may experience. Remember this simple prayer: "Jesus my Lord, my God, my all, you are the only foundation that can hold us up when trials and disaster threaten us. Give me the wisdom, foresight, and strength of character I need to do what is right and good and to reject whatever is false and contrary to your will. May I always meet the challenges and trials of life head on, knowing you are at my side. May I be a doer of your word and not a hearer only."

Wednesday, July 1 ~ Thirteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time Saint Junipero Serra, Priest

Holy Gospel: Matthew 8:28-34 When Jesus came to the territory of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs who were coming from the tombs met him. They were so savage that no one could travel by that road. They cried out, "What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the appointed time?" Some distance away a herd of many swine was feeding. The demons pleaded with him, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of swine." And he said to them, "Go then!" They came out and entered the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea where they drowned. The swineherds ran away, and when they came to the town they reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. Thereupon the whole town came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him they begged him to leave their district.

Meditation: Jesus took pity on these men who were overtaken by a legion of evil spirits. The destructive force of these demons is evident for all who can see as they flee and destroy a herd of swine. After Jesus freed the demoniacs the whole city came out to meet him. No one had demonstrated such power and authority against the forces of Satan as Jesus did. They feared Jesus as a result and begged him to leave them. Why would they not want Jesus to stay? Perhaps the price for such liberation from the power of evil and sin was more than they wanted to pay. Jesus is ready and willing to free us from anything that binds us and that keeps us from the love of God.

Prayer: O God, who by your ineffable mercy have been pleased through the labors of your priest Saint Junipero Serra to count many American peoples within your Church, grant by his intercession that we may so join our hearts to you in love, as to carry always and everywhere before all people the image of your Only Begotten Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: There were a growing number of Christians in Rome within a dozen or so years after the death of Jesus. Wherever the Good News of Jesus was preached, it met the same opposition as Jesus did, and many of those who began to follow him shared his suffering and death. But no human force could stop the power of the Spirit unleashed upon the world. The blood of martyrs has always been, and will always be, the seed of Christians. When you face opposition from friend, family members, co-workers, neighbors, classmates – whomever – for living your life according to the teachings of Christ and his Catholic Church, fear not as you are in good company. Jesus was ridiculed and mocked for proclaiming the truth, his apostles and disciples were mocked and scored for living the truth. We live in an era where it is acceptable – even "fashionable" – to embrace a life of political correctness, an era where many do not want to offend a friend or go against a societal trend by saying "no" but have no problem turning away from God or offending him. Never shy away from living your life according to the laws of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Remember, you profess to be a disciple of Christ – prove it by your actions.

Thursday, July 2 ~ Thirteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Matthew 9:1-8 After entering a boat, Jesus made the crossing, and came into his own town. And there people brought to him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Courage, child, your sins are forgiven." At that, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said: "Why do you harbor evil thoughts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"— he then said to the paralytic, "Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home." He rose and went home. When the crowds saw this they were struck with awe and glorified God who had given such authority to men.

Meditation: *Question:* What cripples the mind and heart and stifles the healing power of love? *Answer:* Sin and an unforgiving mind and heart! None of us should not be amazed at the fact that sin cripples us more than any physical ailment can. When the paralytic was brought to Jesus because of the faith of his friends, Jesus did the unthinkable. He first forgave the man his sins. The scribes regarded this as blasphemy because they understood that only God had authority to forgive sins and to unbind a man or woman from their burden of guilt. Jesus claimed an authority which only God could rightfully give. Jesus not only proved that his authority came from God, he showed the great power of God's redeeming love and mercy by healing the paralytic of his physical ailment.

Prayer: O God, who through the grace of adoption chose us to be children of light, grant, we pray, that we may not be wrapped in the darkness of error but always be seen to stand in the bright light of truth. 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: It would be time well spent for each of us to look deeply and honestly at how we, too, may be crippled by our own sinfulness, and where we turn to for healing. It is all too easy to fall into the habit of letting societal trends redefine what sin is and is not. Truth is truth, and sin is sin, as defined by God the Father (not civil or secular laws, nor decisions of the Supreme Court), the timeless teachings of Jesus Christ (not popular show hosts, newspaper columnists, blogs and other humans) and the one, true church – the Catholic Church – founded by Jesus Christ. Yes, we are sinners. And yes, all are welcome in the Catholic Church. But all are called to convert from sin and the way of the world and submit ourselves to the way of Jesus Christ.

Friday, July 3 ~ Thirteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time Feast of Saint Thomas, Apostle

Holy Gospel: John 20:24-29 Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But Thomas said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Meditation: What gives us unshakeable hope and confidence in the face of death and defeat? The apostles abandoned Jesus in his hour of trial and lost hope when Jesus was handed over to the Romans for execution. They saw the cross as defeat rather than victory. They were slow to believe the reports of the resurrection until the Risen Lord appeared to them and reassured them of his presence and love. The last apostle to meet the resurrected Lord was the first to go with him to Jerusalem at Passover time. The apostle Thomas was a natural pessimist. When Jesus proposed that they visit Lazarus after receiving news of his illness, Thomas said to the disciples: "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). While Thomas deeply loved the Lord, he lacked the courage to stand with Jesus in his passion and crucifixion. After Jesus' death, Thomas made the mistake of withdrawing from the other apostles. He sought loneliness rather than fellowship in his time of adversity. He doubted the women who saw the resurrected Jesus and he doubted his own fellow apostles. When Thomas finally had the courage to rejoin the other apostles, the Lord Jesus made his presence known to him and reassured him that he had indeed overcome death and risen again. When Thomas recognized his Master, he believed and exclaimed that Jesus was truly Lord and truly God!

Prayer: Grant, almighty God, that we may glory in the Feast of the blessed Apostle Thomas, so that we may always be sustained by his intercession and, believing, may have life in the name of Jesus Christ your

Son, whom Thomas acknowledged as the Lord. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: It is through the gift of faith that we, too, are able to recognize the presence of the risen Lord in our personal lives. The Holy Spirit reveals the Lord Jesus to us and helps us to grow in knowledge and understanding of God and his ways. Through the gift of faith we are able to proclaim that Jesus is our personal Lord and our God. He died and rose that we, too, might have new life in him. The Lord offers each of us new life in his Holy Spirit that we may know him personally and walk in this new way of life through the power of his resurrection. Do you believe in God's word and in the power of the Holy Spirit?

**Saturday, July 4 ~ Thirteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time
Independence Day + 250th Anniversary of our Nation**

Given space limitations, it is rare that I have space left for Saturday in the Lectio Divina. What space I have left for this particular edition, as we celebrate this landmark day in the history of these United States of America, I want to provide our faithful readers simply with two prayers for this day to make our own: (1) The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Prayer of Consecration of Our Nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and (2) a Prayer of George Washington. God Bless America!

USCCB PRAYER OF CONSECRATION OF OUR NATION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

O Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, You know the longings of our hearts, and You desire that we enjoy friendship with You. From Your pierced side, You have poured out the wellspring of life, for which we thirst. Your heart burns with a love for all people to return to a right relationship with You. We celebrate the abundant gifts You have given this nation, founded on the self-evident truths that our Creator has endowed all people with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We make reparation for the offenses against You and against human dignity that have taken place in this nation. May our hearts be united to Yours, so that our families and communities enjoy peace and happiness; may broken relationships be reconciled, injustices repaired, and the wounds of our land be healed. May Your Holy Catholic Church serve as a sign, pointing all people to Your infinite love. O Desire of Nations and Center of History, we ask You to bless these United States of America. Who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us! Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us!

A PRAYER OF GEORGE WASHINGTON

A FOUNDING FATHER AND FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

O eternal and everlasting God, I presume to present myself this morning before Thy Divine majesty, beseeching Thee to accept of my humble and hearty thanks, that it hath pleased Thy great goodness to keep and preserve me the night past from all the dangers poor mortals are subject to, and has given me sweet and pleasant sleep, whereby I find my body refreshed and comforted for performing the duties of this day, in which I beseech Thee to defend me from all perils of body and soul.

Direct my thoughts, words and work. Wash away my sins in the Immaculate Blood of the Lamb, and purge my heart by Thy Holy Spirit, from the dross of my natural corruption, that I may with more freedom of mind and liberty of will serve Thee, the everlasting God, in righteousness and holiness this day, and all the days of my life.

Increase my faith in the sweet promises of the Gospel. Give me repentance from dead works.

Pardon my wanderings, and direct my thoughts unto Thyself, the God of my salvation. Teach me how to live in Thy fear, labor in Thy service, and ever to run in the ways of Thy commandments.

Make me always watchful over my heart, that neither the terrors of conscience, the loathing of holy duties, the love of sin, nor an unwillingness to depart this life, may cast me into a spiritual slumber. But daily frame me more and more into the likeness of Thy Son Jesus Christ, that living in Thy fear, and dying in Thy favor, I may in Thy appointed time attain the resurrection of the just unto eternal life. Bless my family, friends and kindred, unite us all in praising and glorifying Thee in all our works begun, continued, and ended, when we shall come to make our last account before Thee blessed Saviour, Who hath taught us thus to pray, our Father.

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