

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 May is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

"The way of Christian perfection begins with a personal summons, addressed to the individual Christian by Christ the Lord, through the Holy Spirit. This summons is a call, a 'vocation.' Every Christian in one way or another receives this vocation from Christ – the call to follow Him." ~Excerpted from *LIFE AND HOLINESS* by Father Thomas Merton, OCSO

Monday, May 12 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Easter

Optional Memorials: Sts. Nereus & Achilleus, Martyrs; St. Pancras, Martyr

Holy Gospel: John 10:1-10 Jesus said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." Although Jesus used this figure of speech, they did not realize what he was trying to tell them. So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

Meditation: One can legitimately ask what shepherding can teach us about God and our relationship with him. At the end of each day the shepherd brought his sheep into shelter. They knew the voice of their shepherd and came at his beckoning. So familiar was the shepherd and his sheep, that each was called by a distinct name. In the winter the sheep were usually brought to a communal village shelter which was locked and kept secure by a guardian. In the summer months the sheep were usually kept out in the fields and then gathered into a fold at night which was guarded by a shepherd throughout the night. He was literally the door through which the sheep had to pass. The scriptures describe God as a shepherd who brings security and peace to his people. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore (Psalm 120:8). Even the leaders of God's people are called shepherds: they shall lead them out and bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep which have no shepherd (Numbers 27:17). Just as a shepherd kept watch over his sheep and protected them from danger, so Jesus stands watch over his people as the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls (1 Peter 2:25). Do you know the peace and security of a life fully submitted to God?

Prayer: O God, perfect light of the blessed, by whose gift we celebrate the paschal mysteries on earth, bring us, we pray, to rejoice in the full measure of your grace for ages unending. 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 Old Testament often speaks of God as "shepherd" of his people, Israel. *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want* (Psalm 23:1). *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!* (Psalm 80:1) *We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture* (Psalm 100:3). The Messiah is also pictured as the shepherd of God's people: *He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms* (Isaiah 40:11). Jesus says he is the *Good Shepherd* who will risk his life to seek out and save the stray sheep (Matthew 18:12, Luke 15:4). He is the *Shepherd and Guardian of our souls* (1 Peter 2:25). Saint Augustine wrote: "He has accomplished what he taught us: He has shown us what He commanded us to do. He laid down his own life for his sheep, that within our mystery he might change his body and blood into food, and nourish the sheep he had redeemed with the food of his own flesh. He has shown us the way we must follow, despite fear of death. He has laid down the pattern to which we must conform

ourselves." So ask yourself: Do you look to Jesus the Good Shepherd, to receive the strength and courage you need to live and serve as his disciple?

Tuesday, May 13 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Easter

Our Lady of Fatima

Holy Gospel: Luke 11:27-28 As Jesus said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" But He said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Meditation: When an admirer wished to compliment Jesus by praising his mother, Jesus did not deny the truth of the blessing she pronounced. Her "beatitude" (which means "blessedness" or "happiness") recalls Mary's canticle: All generations will call me blessed (Luke 1:48). Jesus adds to her words by pointing to the source of all true blessedness or happiness - union with God in heart, mind, and will. Mary humbly submitted herself to the miraculous plan of God for the incarnation of his only begotten Son - the Word of God made flesh in her womb, by declaring: I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word (Luke 1:38). Mary heard the word spoken to her by the angel and she believed it.

Prayer: O God, who chose the Mother of your Son to be our Mother also, grant us that, persevering in penance and prayer for the salvation of the world, we may further more effectively each day the reign of Christ. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer to Our Lady of Fatima: O Most Holy Virgin Mary, Queen of the most holy Rosary, you were pleased to appear to the children of Fatima and reveal a glorious message. We implore you, inspire in our hearts a fervent love for the recitation of the Rosary. By meditating on the mysteries of the redemption that are recalled therein may we obtain the graces and virtues that we ask, through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

Prayers of Petition: Send your prayer requests via e-mail to the Shrine of our Lady of the Rosary in Fatima, Portugal; visit the Shrine web page: <https://www.fatima.pt/en/pages/prayer-requests>

Contemplation: Our ultimate goal in life, the very reason we were created in the first place, is not to attend a certain university, have a particular job, live at a certain address with a particular car parked in the driveway. No, our ultimate goal is to get to heaven where we may experience complete union with God. We were made for God and our hearts are restless until they rest in him. Saint Lucian of Antioch, an early Christian theologian and martyr, once said that "a Christian's only relatives are the saints." Those who follow Jesus Christ and who seek the will of God enter into a new family, a family of "saints" here on earth and in heaven. Jesus changes the order of relationships and shows that true kinship is not just a matter of flesh and blood. Our adoption as sons and daughters of God transforms all our relationships and requires a new order of loyalty to God and his kingdom. As in "those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke 11:28) and those who are "doers of the word, not hearers only" (James 1:22). Think about it!

About Our Lady of Fatima: The famous apparitions of the Virgin Mary to the children of Fatima took place during the First World War, in the summer of 1917. The inhabitants of this tiny village in the diocese of Leiria (Portugal) were mostly poor people, many of them small farmers who went out by day to tend their fields and animals. Children traditionally were assigned the task of herding the sheep.

The three children who received the apparitions had been brought up in an atmosphere of genuine piety: Lucia dos Santos (ten years old) and her two younger cousins, Francisco and Jacinta. Together they tended the sheep and, with Lucy in charge, would often pray the Rosary kneeling in the open. In the summer of 1916 an Angel appeared to them several times and taught them a prayer to the Blessed Trinity.

On Sunday, May 13, 1917, toward noon, a flash of lightning drew the attention of the children, and they saw a brilliant figure appearing over the trees of the Cova da Iria. The "Lady" asked them to pray for the conversion of sinners and an end to the war, and to come back every month, on the 13th.

Further apparitions took place on June 13 and July 13. On August 13 the children were prevented by local authorities from going to the Cova da Iria, but they saw the apparition on the 19th. On September 13 the Lady requested recitation of the Rosary for an end to the war. Finally, on October 13, the "Lady" identified herself as "Our Lady of the Rosary" and again called for prayer and penitence.

On that day a celestial phenomenon also took place: the sun seemed to tumble from the sky and crash toward earth. The children had been forewarned of it as early as May 13, the first apparition. The large

crowd (estimated at 30,000 by newspaper reporters) that had gathered around the children saw the phenomenon and came away astounded.

Official recognition of the "visions" which the children had at the Cova da Iria came on October 13, 1930, when the bishop of Leiria - after long inquiry - authorized the cult of Our Lady of the Rosary at the site. The two younger children had died: Francisco (who saw the apparition but did not hear the words) on April 4, 1919, and his sister Jacinta on February 20, 1920. Sister Lucia died on February 13, 2005, at her Carmelite convent in Coimbra, Portugal, after a long illness.

Wednesday, May 14 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Easter **Feast of Saint Matthias, Apostle**

Holy Gospel: John 15:9-17 Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. "I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another."

Meditation: Do you know the love that produces immeasurable joy? Jesus speaks of the love which the Father and he have for those who belong to him. We can never out give God in love, because he has loved us without measure. Our love for him is a response to his exceeding mercy and kindness towards us. Paul the Apostle tells us that we can abound in joy and hope because "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Romans 5:5). In God's love we find the fullness of grace, life, peace, and joy. Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment – a new way of love. We are to love others as Jesus has loved us.

Prayer: O God, who assigned Saint Matthias a place in the college of Apostles, grant us, through his intercession, that, rejoicing at how your love has been allotted to us, we may merit to be numbered among the elect. 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 essence of this new commandment? True love is sacrificial. It gives all to the beloved. And there is no greater proof in love than the sacrifice of one's life for the sake of another. Jesus proved his love for his disciples by giving his life for them, even to death on the cross. We prove our love for God and for one another when we embrace the way of the cross. What is the cross in my life? When my will crosses with God's will, then God's will must be done. Do you know the joy and contentment of a life fully surrendered to God and consumed with his love?

Thursday, May 15 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Easter **Optional Memorial of Saint Isidore the Farmer**

Today is a fitting day for all of us to pray for those who work the land, grow crops, raise farm animals, and all who provide for the food that is on our tables.

Holy Gospel: John 13:16-20 When Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, he said to them: "Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it. I am not speaking of all of you. I know those whom I have chosen. But so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, the one who ate my food has raised his heel against me. From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

Meditation: Jesus loved his disciples to the end and proved his faithfulness to them even to death on the cross. Through his death and resurrection Jesus opened a new way of relationship and friendship with God. Jesus tells his disciples that if they accept him they also accept the Father who sent him. This principle extends to all who belong to Christ and who speak in his name. To accept the Lord's messenger is to accept Jesus himself. The great honor and the great responsibility any Christian has is to stand in the world for Jesus Christ. As his disciples and ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20), we are called to speak for him and to act on his behalf. Are you ready to stand for Jesus at the cross of humiliation, rejection, opposition, and suffering?

Prayer ~ Saint Isidore the Farmer: Lord God, to whom belongs all creation, and who call us to serve you by caring for the gifts that surround us, inspire us by the example of Saint Isidore to share our food with the hungry and to work for the salvation of all people. 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 of Farmers to Saint Joseph: O glorious Saint Joseph, foster father of Jesus, you did provide for the Holy Family. We commit to your protection all of our crops and farm industries. Deign, we beseech you, to intercede in our behalf with Almighty God, Who rules the seasons, so that our fields being safe from pests and favored by the weather may yield abundant crops that will allow us to supply the wants of life. Thus freed from earthly worries may we after your example apply all our thoughts to eternal life. We beseech you to instill a love of the land into the hearts of our youth for their own salvation and that of Christian unity so that we may all share hereafter in the same blissful life you enjoy in heaven. Amen

Contemplation: Have you ever given any thought as to how you treat those who cause you grief or harm? Especially those who are close to you in some way? In his last supper discourse, Jesus addressed the issue of fidelity and disloyalty in relationships. Jesus knew beforehand that one of his own disciples would betray him. Such knowledge could have easily led Jesus to distance himself from such a person and to protect himself from harm's way. Instead, Jesus expresses his love, affection, and loyalty to those who were his own, even to the one he knew would "stab him in the back" when he got the opportunity.

Friday, May 16 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Easter

Holy Gospel: John 14:1-6 Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way." Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Meditation: The Lord Jesus came to fulfill God's promise to bring his people, not simply to a land flowing with milk and honey, but to a restored paradise and new creation where we can dwell with God in perfect peace and unity. That is why Jesus proclaims, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." Jesus does not simply give advice and direction. He personally is the Way, and we cannot miss it. Through his life-giving word and Spirit, Jesus leads and guides us personally every day. The Lord Jesus also is the Truth. Many can say, "I have taught you the truth." Only Jesus can say, I am the Truth. Moral truth cannot be conveyed in words alone; it must be conveyed in example. Jesus embodies the truth in his person. Jesus also is the Life. He not only shows us the path of life (Psalm 16:11); he gives the kind of life which only God can give – abundant life which never fails nor ends. Is there any fear or trouble that keeps you from the perfect peace and happiness of a life surrendered to Jesus Christ?

Prayer: O God, author of our freedom and of our salvation, listen to the voice of our pleading and grant that those you have redeemed by the shedding of your Son's Blood may have life through you and, under your protection, rejoice for ever unharmed. 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: As much as we try to avoid it, we all inevitably encounter trouble and difficulties that we find hard to endure. Life is not a bowl of cherries, or bed of roses – cherries have pits, and roses have thorns. Jesus knew his disciples would have to face trials and persecution after he left them to return to his Father in heaven. Adversity can make us lose hope and become discouraged, or it can press us closer to God and to his promises. "It is the LORD who goes before you; he will be with you, he will not fail you or forsake you; do not fear or be dismayed" (Deuteronomy 31:8). Just as God went ahead of the Israelites in the wilderness to lead them safely to the promised land, Jesus tells his disciples that he is going ahead to prepare a place for them in God's house – a place of refuge, peace, and security, and everlasting happiness. The greatest fear in this present life – whether it be the separation and loss of life to a loved one or the threat to one's own life – is put to rest by Jesus' promise that we will live forever with him and the Father in their heavenly home.

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