

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 September is dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows.

"At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by 'I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless, and you took me in.' " ~SAINT TERESA OF CALCUTTA (MOTHER TERESA)

**Monday, September 1 ~ Twenty-Second Week in Ordinary Time
~ Labor Day ~**

Holy Gospel: Luke 4:16-30 Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.* Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Is this not the son of Joseph?" He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'" And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

Meditation: It was customary for Jesus to go weekly to the synagogue to worship and on occasion to read the scriptures and comment on them to the people. His hometown folks listened with great attention on this occasion because they had heard about the miracles he had performed in other towns. Jesus startled them with a seeming rebuke that no prophet or servant of God can receive honor among his own people. He then angered them when he complimented the gentiles who seemed to have shown more faith in God than the "chosen ones" of Israel. They regarded gentiles as "fuel for the fires of hell." Jesus' praise for "outsiders" caused them offence because they were blind-sighted to God's mercy and plan of redemption for all nations.

Prayer: O God, Creator of all things, who have commanded the human race to bear the burden of labor, grant that the work we are beginning may progress in this life and, by your favor, advance the spread of the Kingdom of Christ. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: The word "gospel" literally means "good news." Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would come in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring freedom to those oppressed by sin and evil (see Isaiah 61:1-2). Jesus came to set people free from the worst tyranny possible – the tyranny of slavery to sin and the fear of death, and the destruction of both body and soul. God's power alone can save us from emptiness and poverty of spirit, from confusion and error, and from the fear of death and hopelessness. The gospel of salvation is "good news" for us today. Do you know the joy and freedom of the gospel?

Tuesday, September 2 ~ Twenty-Second Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 4:31-37 Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town of Galilee. He taught them on the Sabbath, and they were astonished at his teaching because he spoke with authority. In the synagogue there was a man with the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out in a loud voice, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!" Jesus rebuked him and said, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down in front of them and came out of him without doing him any harm. They were all amazed and said to one another, "What is there about his word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." And news of him spread everywhere in the surrounding region.

Meditation: When Jesus spoke he needed no authorities to back his statements. He was authority incarnate – the Word of God made flesh. When he spoke, God spoke. When he commanded even the demons obeyed. If demons, the fallen angels, believe in the power and authority of the Son of God, how much more should we believe in the power and authority of the gospel – the good news of Jesus Christ – with the full assent of our minds and hearts and entrust our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ? If we approach God's word submissively, with an eagerness to do everything the Lord desires, we are in a much better position to learn what God wants to teach us through his word.

Prayer: God of might, giver of every good gift, put into our hearts the love of your name, so that, by deepening our sense of reverence, and, by your watchful care, keep safe what you have nurtured. 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 you read or hear the word of God how do you respond to it? Do you hear it with indifference, selective submission, or with the full assent of faith and obedience? When Jesus taught he spoke with authority. He spoke the word of God as no one had spoken it before. When the Rabbis taught they supported their statements with quotes from other authorities. The prophets spoke with delegated authority – "Thus says the Lord." If we approach God's word submissively, with an eagerness to do everything the Lord desires, we are in a much better position to learn what God wants to teach us through his word. Are you eager to be taught by the Lord and to conform your life according to his word?

Wednesday, September 3 ~ Twenty-Second Week in Ordinary Time **Saint Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor of the Church**

Holy Gospel: Luke 4:38-44 After Jesus left the synagogue, he entered the house of Simon. Simon's mother-in-law was afflicted with a severe fever, and they interceded with him about her. He stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up immediately and waited on them. At sunset, all who had people sick with various diseases brought them to him. He laid his hands on each of them and cured them. And demons also came out from many, shouting, "You are the Son of God." But he rebuked them and did not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ. At daybreak, Jesus left and went to a deserted place. The crowds went looking for him, and when they came to him, they tried to prevent him from leaving them. But he said to them, "To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent." And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Meditation: Jesus' disciples freely brought their troubles to him, and rightly so, because they found him ready and able to deal with any difficulty, affliction, or sickness which they encountered. When Simon Peter brought Jesus to his home for the Sabbath meal (right after Jesus preached in the synagogue in Capernaum), his mother-in-law was instantly healed because Jesus heard Simon's prayer. Jesus could not avoid drawing a crowd wherever he went. No one who asked Jesus for help was left disappointed. Jesus' numerous healings and exorcisms demonstrated the power and authority of his word, the "good news of the kingdom of God."

Prayer: O God, who care for your people with gentleness and rule them in love, through the intercession of Pope Saint Gregory, endow, we pray, with a spirit of wisdom those to whom you have given authority to govern, that the flourishing of a holy flock may become the eternal joy of the shepherds. 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: Have you noticed that Jesus always puts human need ahead of everything else? His compassion showed the depths of God's love and concern for all who are truly needy. Jesus gave the people the word of God and he healed them physically as well as spiritually. We can never intrude upon God nor exhaust his generosity and kindness. He is ever ready to give to those who earnestly seek him

out. Do you allow Jesus to be the Lord and Healer in your personal life, family, and community? Approach him with expectant faith. God's healing power restores us not only to health but to active service and care of others. There is no trouble he does not want to help us with and there is no bondage he can't set us free from. Do you take your troubles to him with expectant faith that he will help you?

About Saint Gregory the Great: St. Gregory was born at Rome in 540. He was successively senator and prefect of Rome before the age of 30. After five years he resigned and became a monk, transforming his own house into a Benedictine monastery, and founding six others. At the age of 50 he was elected pope, serving from 590 to 604. In 14 years he accomplished much. After seeing English children being sold as slaves in Rome, he sent 40 monks, including St. Augustine of Canterbury, from his own monastery; England owes her conversion to him. At a period when the invasion of the barbarian Lombards created a new situation in Europe, he played a great part in winning them for Christ. When Rome itself was under attack, he personally went to interview the Lombard King. At the same time he watched equally over the holiness of the clergy and the maintenance of Church discipline, and the spiritual interests of all Christendom. He removed unworthy priests from office, forbade taking money for many services, and cared for persecuted Jews and victims of plague and famine. Gregory reformed the liturgy, and it still contains several of his most beautiful prayers. The name "Gregorian chant" recalls this great Pope's work in the development of the Church's music. His commentaries on Holy Scripture exercised a considerable influence on Christian thought in the Middle Ages. His body lies at St. Peter's in Rome.

Thursday, September 4 ~ Twenty-Second Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Luke 5:1-11 While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that the boats were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

Meditation: God chooses ordinary people, like you and me, as his ambassadors and he uses the ordinary circumstances of our daily lives and work situations to draw others into his kingdom. Jesus speaks the same message to us today: we will "catch people" for the kingdom of God if we allow the light of Jesus Christ to shine through us. God wants others to see the light of Christ in us in the way we live, speak, and witness the joy of the gospel. Saint Paul the Apostles says: "But thanks be to God, who in Christ Jesus always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (2 Cor. 2:15).

Prayer: God of might, giver of every good gift, put into our hearts the love of your name, so that, by deepening our sense of reverence, and, by your watchful care, keep safe what you have nurtured. 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: This incident tells us an important truth about how God works in and through each of us for his glory. God expects of us greater things than we can do by ourselves. When we cooperate in his works, we accomplish far beyond what we can do on our own. Saint Therese of Lisieux once wrote: "Jesus has so incomprehensible a love for us that he wills that we have a share with him in the salvation of souls. He wills to do nothing without us. The Creator of the universe awaits the prayer of a poor little soul to save other souls redeemed like it at the price of all his Blood." Do you live the gospel to those around you – neighbors, co-workers, relatives, students – to help them grow in the knowledge of his truths and love?

Friday, September 5 ~ Twenty-Second Week in Ordinary Time **Optional Memorial: Saint Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa)**

Holy Gospel: Luke 5:33-39 The scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus, "The disciples of John the Baptist fast often and offer prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees do the same; but yours eat and drink." Jesus answered them, "Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the

days will come, and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.” And he also told them a parable. “No one tears a piece from a new cloak to patch an old one. Otherwise, he will tear the new and the piece from it will not match the old cloak. Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the skins will be ruined. Rather, new wine must be poured into fresh wineskins. And no one who has been drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good.’”

Meditation: Jesus goes on to warn his disciples about the problem of the “closed mind” that refuses to learn new things. Jesus used an image familiar to his audience – new and old wineskins. In Jesus' times, wine was stored in wineskins, not bottles. New wine poured into skins was still fermenting. The gases exerted gave pressure. New wine skins were elastic enough to take the pressure, but old wine skins easily burst because they were hard. What did Jesus mean by this comparison? Are we to reject the old in place of the new? Just as there is a right place and a right time for fasting and for feasting, so there is a right place for the old as well as the new. How impoverished we would be if we only had the Old Testament or the New Testament, rather than both. The Lord gives us wisdom so we can make the best use of both the old and the new.

Prayer: O God, who called the Virgin Saint Teresa to respond to the love of your Son thirsting on the Cross with outstanding charity to the poorest of the poor, grant us, we beseech you, by her intercession, to minister to Christ in our suffering brothers and sisters. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: There's a time for fasting and a time for feasting (-aka- celebrating). To walk as a disciple with Jesus is to experience a whole new joy of relationship akin to the joy of the wedding party in celebrating with the groom and bride their wedding bliss. But there also comes a time when the Lord's disciples must bear the cross of affliction and purification. For the disciple there is both a time for rejoicing in the Lord's presence and celebrating his goodness and a time for seeking the Lord with humility and fasting and for mourning over sin. Do you take joy in the Lord's presence with you and do you express sorrow and contrition for your sins?

About Saint Teresa of Calcutta: “By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus.” Small of stature, rocklike in faith, Mother Teresa of Calcutta was entrusted with the mission of proclaiming God’s thirsting love for humanity, especially for the poorest of the poor. “God still loves the world and He sends you and me to be His love and His compassion to the poor.” She was a soul filled with the light of Christ, on fire with love for Him and burning with one desire: “to quench His thirst for love and for souls.” The whole of Mother Teresa’s life and labor bore witness to the joy of loving, the greatness and dignity of every human person, the value of little things done faithfully and with love, and the surpassing worth of friendship with God. But there was another heroic side of this great woman that was revealed only after her death. Hidden from all eyes, hidden even from those closest to her, was her interior life marked by an experience of a deep, painful and abiding feeling of being separated from God, even rejected by Him, along with an ever-increasing longing for His love. She called her inner experience, “the darkness.” The “painful night” of her soul, which began around the time she started her work for the poor and continued to the end of her life, led Mother Teresa to an ever more profound union with God. Through the darkness she mystically participated in the thirst of Jesus, in His painful and burning longing for love, and she shared in the interior desolation of the poor. On 5 September Mother Teresa’s earthly life came to an end. Her tomb quickly became a place of pilgrimage and prayer for people of all faiths, rich and poor alike. Mother Teresa left a testament of unshakable faith, invincible hope and extraordinary charity. Her response to Jesus’ plea, “Come be My light,” made her a Missionary of Charity, a “mother to the poor,” a symbol of compassion to the world, and a living witness to the thirsting love of God.

Visit: The Mother Teresa Center at <https://www.motherteresa.org/>

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

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