

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 January is dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus

“Dear friends, God does not look upon the world from afar, unconcerned with our lives, our troubles or our expectations! Instead, he comes among us with the wisdom of his Word made flesh, drawing us into a wondrous plan of love for all humanity.” +POPE LEO XIV

Monday, January 19 ~ Second Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 2:18-22 18The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were accustomed to fast. People came to him and objected, “Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” 19Jesus answered them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. 20But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. 21No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak. If he does, its fullness pulls away, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse. 22Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined. Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins.”

Meditation: Jesus warns his disciples about the problem of the “closed mind” that refuses to learn new things according to his teachings. 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, there is a right place for the old as well as the new. Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old (Matthew 13:52). 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: Almighty ever-living God, who govern all things, both in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the pleading of your people and bestow your peace on our times. 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: Which comes first, fasting or feasting? The disciples of John the Baptist were upset with Jesus' disciples because they did not fast. Fasting was one of the three most important religious duties, along with prayer and almsgiving. Jesus gave a simple explanation. There's a time for fasting and a time for feasting (or 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.

Tuesday, January 20 ~ Second Week in Ordinary Time

Optional Memorials: Pope Saint Fabian, Martyr; Saint Sebastian, Martyr

Holy Gospel: Mark 2:23-28 23As Jesus was passing through a field of grain on the sabbath, his disciples began to make a path while picking the heads of grain. 24At this the Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the sabbath?” 25He said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions were hungry? 26How he went into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the bread of offering that only the priests could lawfully eat, and shared it with his companions?” 27Then he said to them, “The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. 28That is why the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.”

Meditation: What does the commandment “keep holy the Sabbath” require us to do? The religious leaders confronted Jesus on this issue. The “Sabbath rest” was meant to be a time to remember and celebrate God's goodness and the goodness of his work, 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. Jesus' disciples are scolded by the scribes and Pharisees, not for plucking and eating corn from the fields, but for doing so on the Sabbath. In defending his disciples, Jesus argues from the scriptures that human need has precedence over ritual custom.

Prayer + Saint Fabian: O God, glory of your Priests, grant we pray, that, helped by the intercession of your Martyr Saint Fabian, we may make progress by communion in the faith and by worthy service. 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 + Saint Sebastian: Grant us, we pray, O Lord, a spirit of fortitude, so that, taught by the glorious example of your Martyr Saint Sebastian, we may learn to obey you rather than men. 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: So how do you spend the Sabbath? (Sunday for all Christians.) There was a time when families and individuals spent Sunday attending Mass, relaxing in one way or another, having “Sunday Dinner” with family, visiting grandma. The Sabbath – the “Lord’s Day” should always be a day of praise and worship to God through the Mass; it should also be a day rest for us, giving us time to “re-create” ourselves for the coming week. In our hurried world, take some time to contemplate how you spend your Sundays. Carve out time on this day to give praise and worship to God the Father and receive the Eucharist during Mass, then carve out some time for yourself and your family. Where and when is a Catholic Mass nearest me? Go to <https://masstimes.org/> for this information.

Wednesday, January 21 ~ Second Week in Ordinary Time **Memorial: Saint Agnes, Virgin and Martyr**

Holy Gospel: Mark 3:1-6 1Jesus entered the synagogue. There was a man there who had a withered hand. 2They watched him closely to see if he would cure him on the sabbath so that they might accuse him. 3He said to the man with the withered hand, “Come up here before us.” 4Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?” But they remained silent. 5Looking around at them with anger and grieved at their hardness of heart, he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out and his hand was restored. 6The Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel with the Herodians against him to put him to death.

Meditation: What is God's intention for the commandment, keep holy the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8; Deuteronomy 5:12)? The scribes and Pharisees wanted to catch Jesus in the act of breaking the Sabbath ritual so they might accuse him of breaking God's law. In a few penetrating words Mark records that Jesus knew their thoughts. They were filled with fury and contempt for Jesus because they put their own thoughts of right and wrong above God. They were ensnared in their own legalism because they did not understand or see the purpose of God. Jesus shows their fallacy by pointing to God's intention for the Sabbath: to do good and to save life rather than to do evil or to destroy life.

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, who choose what is weak in the world to confound the strong, mercifully grant, that we, who celebrate the heavenly birthday of your Martyr Saint Agnes, may follow her constancy in the faith. 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: We Catholics – in fact all Christians – celebrate Sunday as the Lord's Day, Sunday is our Sabbath, a day to commemorate God's work of redemption in Jesus Christ and the new work of creation he accomplished through Christ's death and resurrection. Taking our “Sabbath rest” is a way of expressing honor to God for all that he has done for us. Such “rest” however does not exempt us from our love for our neighbor. If we truly love the Lord above all else, then the love of God will overflow to love of neighbor as well. Do you honor the Lord in the way you celebrate Sunday, the Lord's Day?

Thursday, January 22 ~ Second Week in Ordinary Time **Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children**

Holy Gospel: Luke 1:39-56 39Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, 40where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, 42cried out in a loud

voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. 45Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

46 And Mary said: *"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; 47my spirit rejoices in God my Savior 48for he has looked with favor upon his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: 49the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 50His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. 51He has shown the strength of his arm, and has scattered the proud in their conceit. 52He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. 53He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. 54He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, 55the promise he made to our fathers, and to Abraham and his children forever."*

56Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Meditation: As Christ's disciples we are called to adhere to the moral code – do good and avoid evil. There are forces in this world who have watered down the fact that abortion is evil; abortion is a mortal sin; abortion is the taking of an innocent human life. As Saint John Chrysostom once noted: "'I am a victim of violence in my nature,' you say. 'I love Christ, yet my nature compels me to sin.' If you were in fact compelled to sin, if you were the victim of violence, then you would be forgiven for it. On the other hand, if you sin through idleness, do not expect forgiveness. But let us look at the question a moment to discover if we do commit sins by compulsion, under pressure of violence, rather than through idleness or serious negligence. It is written: 'Thou shalt not kill.' But who compels you to kill? Who forces you to do it? You have to do violence to your own nature to kill someone. Which of us would light-heartedly cut a neighbor's throat? Who would gladly stain his hands with blood? No one. So the facts are the exact opposite of your contention. To sin, you have to force yourself. God has given our nature the gift of mutual love as a result of which every living creature loves its own kind, every human being loves his neighbor. Do you see? Our nature predisposes us to virtue. It is the vices that are contrary to nature. If they win a victory, it is the fault of serious negligence on our part. The conclusion is clearly apparent: virtue is consistent with our nature whereas vice is opposed to it."

Prayer: God our Creator, we give thanks to you, who alone have the power to impart the breath of life as you form each of us in our mother's womb; grant, we pray, that we, whom you have made stewards of creation, may remain faithful to this sacred trust and constant in safeguarding the dignity of every human life. 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 to end abortion: Lord God, I thank you today for the gift of my life, And for the lives of all my brothers and sisters. I know there is nothing that destroys more life than abortion, Yet I rejoice that you have conquered death by the Resurrection of Your Son. I am ready to do my part in ending abortion. Today I commit myself never to be silent, never to be passive, never to be forgetful of the unborn. I commit myself to be active in the pro-life movement, and never to stop defending life until all my brothers and sisters are protected, and our nation once again becomes a nation with liberty and justice not just for some, but for all, through Christ our Lord. Amen!

We pray for all whose hearts ache from the sin of abortion, that God will soothe and heal them with the balm of his love, compassion and mercy; **We pray for all who are broken by the memory of a child lost to abortion,** that through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of God, the gentle and merciful love of God may heal their innermost being; **We pray for everyone who is haunted by the memory of abortion,** that they might come to know repentance, forgiveness, mercy, and peace.

Friday, January 23 ~ Second Week in Ordinary Time **Optional Memorial: Saint Vincent of Saragossa, Deacon and Martyr**

Holy Gospel: Mark 3:13-19 13Jesus went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. 14He appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach 15and to have authority to drive out demons: 16He appointed the twelve: Simon, whom he named Peter; 17James, son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, whom he named Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder; 18Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, 19and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Meditation: When Jesus embarked on his mission he chose twelve men for the task of preaching the kingdom of God and healing the sick in the power of that kingdom. In the choice of the twelve, we see a characteristic feature of God's work: Jesus chose very ordinary people. 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 to be his apostles – not for what they were, but for what they would be capable of becoming under his direction and power.

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, mercifully pour out your Spirit upon us, so that our hearts may possess the strong love by which the Martyr Saint Vincent triumphed over all bodily torments. 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: While Jesus called twelve men to be his apostles, Jesus calls all of us to serve the Lord as his disciples. 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. Do you make your life an offering to the Lord and allow him to use you as he sees fit?

Saturday, January 24 ~ Second Week in Ordinary Time
Memorial: Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop and Doctor of the Church
Patron Saint of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Columbus

Holy Gospel: Mark 3:20-21 20Jesus came with his disciples into the house. Again the crowd gathered, making it impossible for them even to eat. 21When his relatives heard of this they set out to seize him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

Meditation: Is the Lord Jesus honored in your home? Why would Jesus' relatives be so upset with him when he began his public ministry? On one occasion Jesus remarked that a man's enemies will be the members of his own household (Matthew 10:36). The Gospel of Mark records the reaction of Jesus' relatives when he went home: they came to seize him. They, no doubt, thought that Jesus must have gone mad or become a religious fanatic. How could a good home-body from Nazareth leave his father's carpentry trade and go off to become an itinerant preacher? Jesus had thrown away the security and safety of a quiet and respectable life close to his family and relatives. He, undoubtedly, expected opposition from the Jewish authorities. The hardest opposition, however, may come from someone close to us, even your own kin. Jesus met opposition with grace and with determination to fulfill his Father's will. Are you ready to obey and follow the Lord even if others oppose your doing so?

Prayer: O God, who for the salvation of souls willed that the Bishop Saint Francis de Sales become all things to all, graciously grant that, following his example, we may always display the gentleness of your charity in the service of our neighbor. 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 Gospel, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and so many saints all tell us that talk is cheap – that love ought to show itself more in deeds than in words, that we ought to focus more on acting like Catholics and Christians by loving one another than by going around simply talking about being a Catholic Christian. Part of today's message is about not being a hypocrite, which begs the question -- have you co-opted this directive for your own devices, using it as a reason to rarely talk about being a Catholic Christian. Why ask this? Because of what happened to Jesus and his followers in today's gospel passage. After beginning his ministry, he returns home where his friends and relatives reject him and think he is crazy. Do you shortchange your faith in order to be part of the crowd?

About Saint Francis de Sales: Francis was born on August 21, 1567, and ordained to the priesthood in 1593. From 1594 to 1598 he labored at the difficult and dangerous task of preaching to the Protestants of Chablais and effected the return of some 70,000 souls to the Catholic faith. In 1602 he became bishop of Genf. His zeal for souls is attested in 21,000 extant letters and 4,000 sermons which exemplify how he applied St. Paul's words: "I have become all things to all men." You may epitomize his character in two words, kindness and loveliness — virtues that were the secret of his success. His writings reflect his kindheartedness and sweet disposition. Most widely known is the saint's *Introduction to the Devout Life*, which, with the *Imitation of Christ*, is rightly considered the finest outline of Christian perfection. Francis' *Introduction* proves to the world that true piety makes persons amiable, lovable and happy.

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