

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 February is dedicated to the Holy Family + Jesus, Mary and Joseph

“Let us raise our prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Health of the Sick, asking her to assist all who suffer and are in need of compassion, consolation and a listening ear. Let us seek her intercession with this ancient prayer, that has been invoked in families for those living with illness and pain: Sweet Mother, do not part from me. Turn not your eyes away from me. Walk with me at every moment and never leave me alone. You who always protect me as a true Mother, obtain for me the blessing of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” +POPE LEO XIV, EXCERPT: MESSAGE, 34TH WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

Monday, February 9 ~ Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: 6:53-56 After making the crossing to the other side of the sea, Jesus and his disciples came to land at Gennesaret and tied up there. As they were leaving the boat, people immediately recognized him. They scurried about the surrounding country and began to bring in the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. Whatever villages or towns or countryside he entered, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak; and as many as touched it were healed.

Meditation: Believing and trusting in God to act in our lives is only possible by the grace and help of the Holy Spirit who moves the heart and converts it to God. The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the mind and helps us to understand, accept, and believe God's word. How do we grow in faith? By simply listening to God's word above all others, and do so with trust and submission. Faith also grows through testing and perseverance. The Lord wants to teach us how to pray in faith for his will for our lives and for the things he wishes to give us to enable us to follow him faithfully and serve him generously. Jesus gave his disciples the perfect prayer which acknowledges God as our Father who provides generously for his children. The *Lord's Prayer* teaches us to seek first the kingdom of God and to pray that God's will be accomplished in our lives. The Lord in turn, gives us what we need to live each day for his glory. The Lord is neither too distant nor too busy to meet us and to give each of us his blessing.

Prayer: Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your protection. 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: Notice how when Jesus disembarked from the boat the people immediately recognized him. What did they recognize in Jesus? Jesus as the prophet, the healer, the Messiah, the Son of God? All of these? For sure they recognized that Jesus had the power from God to heal and to make whole bodies, limbs, minds, and hearts that were diseased, afflicted, and with sin. What happened when they pressed upon him and touched the fringe of his garment? They were made well. Jesus Christ is always ready to meet our needs as well. Do you approach Jesus with expectant faith? If not, what's holding you back?

Tuesday, February 10 ~ Fifth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Scholastica, Virgin

Holy Gospel: Mark 7:1-13 When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. (For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles and beds.) So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, “Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?” He

responded, "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: *This people honors me with their lips, / but their hearts are far from me; / In vain do they worship me, / teaching as doctrines human precepts.* You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition." He went on to say, "How well you have set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition! For Moses said, *Honor your father and your mother, and Whoever curses father or mother shall die.* Yet you say, 'If someone says to father or mother, "Any support you might have had from me is *qorban*"' (meaning, dedicated to God), you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother. You nullify the word of God in favor of your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many such things."

Meditation: The Jewish people went to great pains to ensure that their worship would conform to the instructions which God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. God's call to his people was a call to holiness: "be holy, for I am holy" (ref. Leviticus 11:44; 19:2). In their zeal for holiness many elders developed elaborate traditions which became a burden for the people to carry out in their everyday lives. The Scribes and Pharisees were upset with Jesus because he allowed his disciples to break with their ritual traditions by eating with unclean hands. They sent a delegation from Jerusalem to Galilee to bring their accusation in a face-to-face confrontation with Jesus. Jesus dealt with their accusation by going to the heart of the matter – by looking at God's intention and purpose for the commandments.

Prayer: As we celebrate anew the Memorial of the Virgin Saint Scholastica, we pray, O Lord, that, following her example, we may serve you with pure love and happily receive what comes from loving 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: Jesus accused them specifically of two things. The first was hypocrisy. Like actors, who put on make-up and costumes to put on a show, they "appear" to obey God's word in their external practices while in reality they inwardly harbor evil desires and intentions – appearances can be deceiving. Secondly, he accused them of abandoning God's word by substituting their own arguments and ingenious interpretations for what God requires. They listened to clever arguments rather than to God's word. Jesus refers them to the prophecy of Isaiah (29:31) where the prophet accuses the people of his day for honoring God with their lips while their hearts went astray because of disobedience to God's laws. If we listen to God's word with faith and reverence, it will both enlighten our mind and purify the hearts – thus enabling us to better understand how he wants us to love and obey him. The Lord invites each of us to draw close to him and to feast at his banquet table. As you are invited, do you approach with a clean heart and a clean mind – one free from sin? If it's been a while, perhaps you might get into the confessional and receive absolution from a priest for your sins. The Season of Lent is fast approaching, but why wait – there's no time like the present to seek the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Wednesday, February 11 ~ Fifth Week in Ordinary Time **Our Lady of Lourdes + 34th World Day of the Sick**

Place your prayer petitions at the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes + Lourdes, France
Go to: <https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/intention-priere/>

Message of Pope Leo XIV for the 34th World Day of the Sick
Go to: <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/sick/documents/20260113-messaggio-giornata-malato.html>

Holy Gospel: John 2:1-11 On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with His disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you." Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast." So they took it. When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

Meditation: This particular miracle signifies the new rich wine of the Gospel and it points to the "wine of the new covenant" and the "bread of life" which Jesus provides for his disciples in the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. It also points to the Messianic banquet which Jesus will provide at the end of time. The miracles

of Jesus demonstrate the power of God's love and mercy for his people. God's kindness knows no limits. And the ultimate expression of his love is revealed in the person of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. He became flesh for our sake, and he died for our redemption, and he rose for our glorification.

Prayer: Grant us, O merciful God, protection in our weakness, that we, who keep the Memorial of the Immaculate Mother of God, may with the help of her intercession, rise up from our iniquities. 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 Our Lady of Lourdes: O ever-Immaculate Virgin, Mother of Mercy, health of the sick, refuge of sinners, comforter of the afflicted, you know my wants, my troubles, my sufferings; look with mercy on me. By appearing in the Grotto of Lourdes, you were pleased to make it a privileged sanctuary, whence you dispense your favors; and already many sufferers have obtained the cure of their infirmities, both spiritual and corporal. I come, therefore, with complete confidence to implore your maternal intercession. Obtain, O loving Mother, the grant of my requests. Through gratitude for your favors, I will endeavor to imitate your virtues, that I may one day share your glory. Amen.

Contemplation: God reveals his glory in the unlikeliest of places — in a stable at Bethlehem, at a wedding feast in Cana, in a muddy Jordan river, and on a bloody cross on Golgatha. Jesus' first public miracle (his first sign) was performed at the insistence of his mother. Jesus blessed a young couple and brought joy to their wedding party. First by his presence, and second by saving them from embarrassment when the wine ran out. Changing water into wine was a remarkable act of kindness; but giving the best to last was unnecessary and unheard of. In the Old Testament wine was often seen as a gift and symbol of God's blessing (ref. Deuteronomy 7:13; Proverbs 3:10, Psalm 105). That Jesus would miraculously produce 120 gallons of the best wine (many times more than needed) shows the superabundance of the blessings which he came to offer. These blessings also pour forth through the Blessed Virgin Mary. Today marks the first apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1858 to fourteen-year-old Marie Bernadette (St. Bernadette) Soubirous. Between February 11 and July 16, 1858, the Blessed Virgin appeared eighteen times, and showed herself to St. Bernadette in the hollow of the rock at Lourdes. On March 25 she said to the little shepherdess who was only fourteen years of age: "I am the Immaculate Conception." Since then Lourdes has become a place of pilgrimage and many cures, healings and conversions have taken place. The message of Lourdes is simple – one of personal conversion, prayer, and charity. With Lent on the horizon – less than one week away – how might you engage in personal conversion, prayer and charity, or seek healing?

About Our Lady of Lourdes: The many miracles which have been performed through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes prompted the Church to institute a special commemorative feast, the "Apparition of the Immaculate Virgin Mary." The Office gives the historical background. Four years after the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854), the Blessed Virgin appeared a number of times to a very poor and holy girl named Bernadette. The actual spot was in a grotto on the bank of the Gave River near Lourdes. The Immaculate Conception had a youthful appearance and was clothed in a pure white gown and mantle, with an azure blue girdle. A golden rose adorned each of her bare feet. On her first apparition, February 11, 1858, the Blessed Virgin bade the girl make the sign of the Cross piously and say the rosary with her. Bernadette saw her take the rosary that was hanging from her arms into her hands. This was repeated in subsequent apparitions. With childlike simplicity Bernadette once sprinkled holy water on the vision, fearing that it was a deception of the evil spirit; but the Blessed Virgin smiled pleasantly, and her face became even more lovely. The third time Mary appeared she invited the girl to come to the grotto daily for two weeks. Now she frequently spoke to Bernadette. On one occasion she ordered her to tell the ecclesiastical authorities to build a church on the spot and to organize processions. Bernadette also was told to drink and wash at the spring still hidden under the sand. Finally on the feast of the Annunciation, the beautiful Lady announced her name, "I am the Immaculate Conception." The report of cures occurring at the grotto spread quickly and the more it spread, the greater the number of Christians who visited the hallowed place. The publicity given these miraculous events on the one hand and the seeming sincerity and innocence of the girl on the other made it necessary for the bishop of Tarbes to institute a judicial inquiry. Four years later he declared the apparitions to be supernatural and permitted the public veneration of the Immaculate Conception in the grotto. Soon a chapel was erected, and since that time countless pilgrims come every year to Lourdes to fulfill promises or to beg graces.

Watch the movie: "Song of Bernadette" + <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMeVkz2ALU8>

Thursday, February 12 ~ Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 7:24-30 Jesus went to the district of Tyre. He entered a house and wanted no one to know about it, but he could not escape notice. Soon a woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him. She came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by birth, and she begged him to drive the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, "Let the children be fed first. For it is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." She replied and said to him, "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's scraps." Then he said to her, "For saying this, you may go. The demon has gone out of your daughter." When the woman went home, she found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

Meditation: This passage describes the only occasion in which Jesus ministered outside of Jewish territory. (Tyre and Sidon were fifty miles north of Israel and still exist today in modern Lebanon.) A Gentile woman – an outsider who was not a member of the chosen people – puts Jesus on the spot by pleading with him to show mercy to her daughter who was tormented with an evil spirit. At first Jesus seemed to pay no attention to her, and this made his disciples feel embarrassed. Jesus very likely did this not to put the woman off, but rather to test her sincerity and to awaken faith in her.

Prayer: Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your protection. 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: Jesus praises a Gentile woman for her persistent faith and for her affectionate love. She made the misery of her child her own and she was willing to suffer rebuff in order to obtain healing for her loved one. She also had indomitable persistence. Her faith grew in contact with the person of Jesus. She began with a request and she ended on her knees in worshipful prayer to the living God. No one who ever sought Jesus with faith – whether Jew or Gentile – was refused his help. Do you seek Jesus with expectant faith?

Friday, February 13 ~ Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 7:31-37 Jesus left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis. And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, "*Ephphatha!*" (that is, "Be opened!") and immediately the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly. He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it. They were exceedingly astonished and they said, "He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Meditation: No problem or burden was ever too much for Jesus' careful consideration. The Lord treats each of us with kindness and compassion and he calls us to treat one another in like kind. The Holy Spirit who dwells within us enables us to love as Jesus loves. Pope Saint Gregory the Great commented on this miracle: "The Spirit is called the finger of God. When the Lord puts his fingers into the ears of the deaf mute, he was opening the soul of man to faith through the gifts of the Holy Spirit."

Prayer: Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your protection. 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: Jesus never turned anyone aside who approached him with sincerity and trust. He demonstrated both the beauty and goodness of God in his actions. When Jesus approaches a man who is both deaf and who stutters, Jesus shows his compassion by taking him aside privately. Jesus then puts his fingers into the deaf man's ears and he touches the man's tongue with his own spittle to physically identify with this man's infirmity and to awaken faith in him. With a word of command the poor man's ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. How do you expect the Lord to treat you, when you ask for his help? Do you approach him cynically and with doubt, or with awe, wonder, faith and confidence? Perhaps some relationship building would be useful during Lent? Something to think about and act upon – **Lent begins in five days, folks, with Ash Wednesday!**

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