

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)

*Jubilee Year 2025: Pilgrims of Hope
The Month of March is dedicated to Saint Joseph*

“Receive me, dear and chosen Father, and the offering of every movement of my body and soul, which I desire to present through thee to my blessed Lord. Purify all! Make all a perfect holocaust! May every pulsation of my heart be a Spiritual Communion, every look and thought an act of love, every action a sweet sacrifice, every word an arrow of Divine love, every step an advance toward Jesus, every visit to Our Lord as pleasing to God as the errands of Angels, every thought of thee, dear Saint, an act to remind thee that I am thy child. I recommend to thee the occasions in which I usually fail, particularly . . . [Mention these]. Accept each little devotion of the day, though replete with imperfection, and offer it to Jesus, Whose mercy will overlook all, since He regards not so much the gift as the love of the giver. Amen.” +PRAYER ~ MORNING OFFERING TO SAINT JOSEPH

Monday, March 17 ~ Second Week in the Season of Lent

Optional Memorial: Saint Patrick of Ireland, Bishop and Confessor

Holy Gospel: Luke 6:36-38 Jesus said to his disciples: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. “Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”

Meditation: God seeks our highest good and teaches us to seek the greatest good of others, even those who hate and abuse us. Our love for others, even those who are ungrateful and selfish towards us, must be marked by the same kindness and mercy which God has shown to us. It is easier to show kindness and mercy when we can expect to benefit from doing so. How much harder when we can expect nothing in return. Our prayer for those who do us ill both breaks the power of revenge and releases the power of love to do good in the face of evil. How can we possibly love those who cause us harm, ill-will, and grief? With God all things are possible. He gives power and grace to those who know his love and who ask for the gift and help of the Holy Spirit. Paul the Apostle reminds us that “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Romans 5:5) God’s love conquers all, even our hurts, fears, prejudices and grief. Only the cross of Jesus Christ and his victory over sin can free us from the tyranny of malice, hatred, revenge, and resentment, and give us the courage to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

Prayer: O God, who have taught us to chasten our bodies for the healing of our souls, enable us, we pray, to abstain from all sins, and strengthen our hearts to carry out your loving commands. 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 Patrick: O God, who chose the Bishop Saint Patrick to preach your glory to the peoples of Ireland, grant, through his merits and intercession, that those who glory in the name of Christian may never cease to proclaim your wondrous deeds to all. 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 ~ “The Deer’s Cry” ~ “Saint Patrick’s Breastplate”: Visit this web page for this beloved prayer: <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=139>

Contemplation: What makes Christians different and what makes Christianity distinct from any other religion? It is grace – treating others, not as they deserve, but as God wishes them to be treated – with loving-kindness and mercy. Do you pray for mercy and forgive those who wrong you? When we are confronted with our sinful condition and failings we experience guilt and shame. This can often either lead

us to cast off pride and make-belief or it can lead us to lose our inhibitions and fall into more shameless deeds! If we are utterly honest and humble before God, we will admit our sins and ask for his mercy and forgiveness. Do you know the joy and freedom of repentance, forgiveness, and a clean heart?

Tuesday, March 18 ~ Second Week in the Season of Lent
Optional Memorial: Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Holy Gospel: Matthew 23:1-12 Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.' As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.' You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called 'Master'; you have but one master, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Meditation: Jesus appears to be warning both his disciples and the religious leaders about the temptation to seek titles and honors to increase one's reputation and admiration by others. Sacred scripture gives ample warning about the danger of self-seeking pride: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6; Proverbs 3:24). Respect for God and his ways inclines us to Godly humility and simplicity of heart. What is true humility and why should we embrace it? True humility is not feeling bad about yourself, or having a low opinion of yourself, or thinking of yourself as inferior to others. True humility frees us from preoccupation with ourselves, whereas a low self-opinion tends to focus our attention on ourselves. Humility is truth in self-understanding and truth in action. Viewing ourselves truthfully, with sober judgment, means seeing ourselves the way God sees us (Psalm 139:1-4). A humble person makes a realistic assessment of oneself without illusion or pretense to be something one is not. A truly humble person regards oneself neither smaller nor larger than one truly is. True humility frees us to be ourselves as God sees us and to avoid despair and pride. A humble person does not want to wear a mask or put on a facade in order to look good to others. Such a person is not swayed by accidentals, such as fame, reputation, success, or failure. Do you know the joy of Christ-like humility and simplicity of heart?

Prayer: Look upon your family, Lord, that, through the chastening effects of bodily discipline, our minds may be radiant in your presence with the strength of our yearning for 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.

Prayer ~ Saint Cyril: O God, who through the Bishop Saint Cyril of Jerusalem led your Church in a wonderful way to a deeper sense of the mysteries of salvation, grant us, through his intercession, that we may so acknowledge your Son as to have life ever more abundantly. 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 humility serves as the foundation of all the other virtues because humility enables us to see the way that God sees. Humility opens our minds and hearts so that each of us can acquire true knowledge, wisdom, and an honest view of reality. Humility directs our energy, zeal, and ambition to give ourselves to something greater than ourselves. Humility frees us to love and serve others selflessly, for their sake, rather than our own. Humility understands our need for help from God, as often as necessary, as part of our having a relationship with God. As Saint John Climacus wrote: "When one understands the need of God's help, he is driven to prayer and the force of that prayer makes for humility of heart. Anyone, in fact, who does not feel this need and does not ask for help, is not humble."

Wednesday, March 19 ~ Second Week in the Season of Lent
Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Patron of the Universal Church

Holy Gospel: Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ. Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a just man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to

name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

Meditation: Joseph's faith was put to the test when he discovered that his espoused wife was pregnant. Joseph, a just and God-fearing man, did not wish to embarrass or punish Mary. Joseph, no doubt took this troubling matter to God in prayer; he was not hasty to judge or to react with hurt and anger. God rewarded Joseph not only with guidance and consolation, but with the divine assurance that he had indeed called Joseph to be the husband of Mary and to assume a mission that would require the utmost faith, confidence, and trust in Almighty God. Joseph believed in the divine message to take Mary as his wife and to accept the child in her womb as the promised Messiah. Joseph was a worthy successor to the great patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He followed the call of God through the mysterious circumstances that surrounded the coming of Jesus. God entrusted this silent, humble man with the unique privilege of raising his only Son. Joseph is a faithful witness and servant of God's plan of redemption.

Prayer: Grant, we pray, almighty God, that by Saint Joseph's intercession your Church may constantly watch over the unfolding of the mysteries of human salvation, whose beginnings you entrusted to his faithful care. 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.

Prayers to Saint Joseph: There are a number of prayers to Saint Joseph. Visit this web page to read, meditate and pray: <https://mycatholic.life/year-of-saint-joseph/#novena>

Contemplation: Ask yourself: Are you prepared to obey the Lord in everything? Everything?! Faith in God's word and obedience to his commands go hand in hand. Joseph, like Mary, is a model of faith and justice; he willingly obeyed the Lord in all things. Imitate Joseph, a human like you and I, and watch great things happen in your life as you live your life according to God's way instead of the way of the world.

About Saint Joseph: Saint Joseph was an ordinary manual laborer although descended from the royal house of David. In the designs of Providence he was destined to become the spouse of the Mother of God. His high privilege is expressed in a single phrase, "Foster-father of Jesus." About him Sacred Scripture has little more to say than that he was a just man – an expression which indicates how faithfully he fulfilled his high trust of protecting and guarding God's greatest treasures upon earth, Jesus and Mary. The darkest hours of his life may well have been those when he first learned of Mary's pregnancy; but precisely in this time of trial Joseph showed himself great. His suffering, which likewise formed a part of the work of redemption, was not without great providential import: Joseph was to be, for all times, the trustworthy witness of the Messiah's virgin birth. After this, he modestly retires into the background of Holy Scripture. Of Saint Joseph's death the Bible tells us nothing. There are indications, however, that he died before the beginning of Christ's public life. His was the most beautiful death that one could have, in the arms of Jesus and Mary. At present there are two major feasts in his honor. On March 19 our veneration is directed to him personally and to his part in the work of redemption, while on May 1 we honor him as the patron of workmen throughout the world and as our guide in the difficult matter of establishing equitable norms regarding obligations and rights in the social order.

Thursday, March 20 ~ Second Week in the Season of Lent

Holy Gospel: Luke 16:19-31 Jesus said to the Pharisees: "There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.' He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.' "

Meditation: The name "Lazarus" means "God is my help." Despite a life of misfortune and suffering, Lazarus did not lose hope in God. His eyes were set on a treasure stored up for him in heaven. The rich

man, however, could not see beyond his material wealth and possessions. He not only had every thing he needed, he selfishly spent all he had on himself. He was too absorbed in what he possessed to notice the needs of those around him. He lost sight of God and the treasure of heaven because he was preoccupied with seeking happiness in material things. He served wealth rather than God. In the end the rich man became a beggar! Remember, those who place their hope and trust in God will not be disappointed.

Prayer: O God, who delight in innocence and restore it, direct the hearts of your servants to yourself, that, caught up in the fire of your Spirit, we may be found steadfast in faith and effective in works. 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: In this parable, Jesus paints a dramatic scene of contrasts – riches and poverty, heaven and hell, compassion and indifference, inclusion and exclusion. We also see an abrupt and dramatic reversal of fortune. Lazarus was not only poor, but sick and unable to lift himself. He was “laid” at the gates of the rich man’s house. The dogs which licked his sores probably also stole the little bread he got for himself. Dogs in the ancient world symbolized contempt. Enduring the torment of these savage dogs only added to the poor man’s miseries and sufferings. The rich man treated the beggar with contempt and indifference, until he found his fortunes reversed at the end of his life! In God's economy, those who hold on possessively to what they have, lose it all in the end, while those who share generously receive back many times more than they gave away. This Lent (and beyond) let’s learn to share more with those who have little or nothing, generously helping those in need, and doing so with compassion and love.

Friday, March 21 ~ Second Week in the Season of Lent

Holy Gospel: Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46 Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: “Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.’ They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes? They answered him, ‘He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times.’” Jesus said to them, Did you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes? Therefore, I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit.” When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that he was speaking about them. And although they were attempting to arrest him, they feared the crowds, for they regarded him as a prophet.

Meditation: So why did Jesus' story about wicked tenants cause offense to the scribes and Pharisees? It contained both a prophetic message and a warning as it richly conveys some important truths about God and the way he deals with his people. First, it tells us of God's generosity and trust. The vineyard is well equipped with everything the tenants need. The owner went away and left the vineyard in the hands of the tenants. God, likewise trusts us enough to give us freedom to run life as we choose. This parable also tells us of God's patience and justice. Not once, but many times he forgives the tenants their debts.

Prayer: Grant, we pray, almighty God, that, purifying us by the sacred practice of penance, you may lead us in sincerity of heart to attain the holy things to come. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: Jesus foretold both his death and his ultimate triumph. He knew he would be rejected and be killed, but he also knew that would not be the end. After rejection would come glory – the glory of resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father. The Lord blesses his people today with the gift of his kingdom. And he promises that we will bear much fruit if we abide in him (ref. John 15:1-11). He entrusts his gifts and grace to each of us and he gives us work to do in his vineyard – the body of Christ. He promises that our labor will not be in vain if we persevere with faith to the end (ref. 1 Corinthians 15:58). We can expect trials and even persecution, but in the end we will see triumph.

Antiphons and scripture passages courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Daily meditations and contemplations adapted from *Biblical Medications for Lent* by Rev. Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P.; prayers are from *The Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing, 2011; information about saints, solemnities, feasts and memorials courtesy of the Catholic Culture web site.