

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

"This woman of faith, Mary of Nazareth, the Mother of God, has been given to us as a model in our pilgrimage of faith. From Mary we learn to surrender to God's will in all things. From Mary, we learn to trust even when all hope seems gone. From Mary, we learn to love Christ, her Son and the Son of God. For Mary is not only the Mother of God, she is Mother of the Church as well. In every stage of the march through history, the Church has benefited from the prayer and protection of the Virgin Mary. Holy Scripture and the experience of the faithful see the Mother of God as the one who in a very special way is united with the Church at the most difficult moments in her history, when attacks on the Church become most threatening. Precisely in periods when Christ, and therefore His Church, provokes premeditated contradiction, Mary appears particularly close to the Church, because for her the Church is always her beloved Christ. I therefore exhort you in Christ Jesus, to continue to look to Mary as the model of the Church, as the best example of the discipleship of Christ. Learn from her to be always faithful, to trust that God's word to you will be fulfilled, and that nothing is impossible with God. Turn to Mary frequently in your prayer 'for never was it known that anyone who fled to her protection, implored her help or sought her intercession was left unaided.'"

+POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II; HOMILY EXCERPT, WASHINGTON, D.C., OCTOBER 6, 1979

Monday, May 4 ~ Fifth Week in the Season of Easter

Holy Gospel: John 14:21-26 Jesus said to his disciples: "Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him." Judas, not the Iscariot, said to him, "Master, then what happened that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me.

"I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you."

Meditation: God's love for each of us is as real and tangible as the love of a mother for her child and the love of a lover who gives all for his beloved. God made us for love – to know him personally and to grow in the knowledge of his great love for us. How can we know and be assured of the love of God? The Holy Spirit helps us to grow in the knowledge of God and his great love. The Spirit enables us to experience the love of God and to be assured of the Lord's abiding presence with us (see Romans 8:35-39). The Holy Spirit also opens our ears to hear and understand the word of God. Do you listen attentively to God's word and believe it? Ask the Holy Spirit to inflame your heart with the love of God and his word.

Prayer: May your right hand, O Lord, we pray, encompass your family with perpetual help, so that, defended from all wickedness by the Resurrection of your Only Begotten Son, we may make our way by means of your heavenly gifts. 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: Do you know the love that surpasses all, that is stronger than death itself (Song of Songs 8:6)? In Jesus' last supper discourse he speaks of the love he has for his disciples and of his Father's love. He prepares his disciples for his imminent departure to return to his Father by exhorting them to prove their love for him through their loyalty and obedience to his word. He promises them the abiding instruction and consolation of the Holy Spirit. Saint Augustine says "the Lord loves each of us as if there were only one of us to love."

Tuesday, May 5 ~ Fifth Week in the Season of Easter

Holy Gospel: John 14:27-31a Jesus said to his disciples: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I will come back to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe. I will no longer speak much with you, for the ruler of the world is coming. He has no power over me, but the world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me."

Meditation: Nothing can take us from the peace and joy of Jesus Christ. No sorrow or grief, no danger, no suffering can make it less. Jesus also speaks of his destination and ultimate triumph over the powers of evil in the world. In the eyes of the world the cross stood for shame, humiliation, and defeat. Jesus went to the cross knowing that it would lead to victory over the powers of sin and of Satan. Jesus also knew that he would return to his Father in glory. The cross brought glory to Jesus and to the Father and it is our way to glory as well. In the Cross of Christ we find true peace and reconciliation with God. Do you live in the peace of Jesus Christ?

Prayer: O God, who restore us to eternal life in the Resurrection of Christ, grant your people constancy in faith and hope, that we may never doubt the promises of which we have learned from 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: Do you know the peace which passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7)? In his farewell discourse Jesus grants peace as his gift to his disciples. What kind of peace does he offer? The peace of Christ is more than the absence of trouble. It includes everything which makes for our highest good. The world's approach to peace is avoidance of trouble and a refusal to face unpleasant things. Jesus offers the one true peace which conquers all of our fears and anxieties. Do you seek his peace before other sources of peace which are fleeting at best?

Wednesday, May 6 ~ Fifth Week in the Season of Easter

Holy Gospel: John 15:1-8 Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

Meditation: People often wonder why Jesus speaks of himself as the "true vine?" The image of the vine was a rich one for the Jews since the land of Israel was covered with numerous vineyards. It had religious connotations to it as well. Isaiah spoke of the house of Israel as "the vineyard of the Lord" (Isaiah 5:7). Jeremiah said that God had planted Israel "as his choice vine" (Jeremiah 2:21). While the vine became a symbol of Israel as a nation, it also was used in the scriptures as a sign of degeneration. Isaiah's prophecy spoke of Israel as a vineyard which "yielded wild grapes" (see Isaiah 5:1-7). Jeremiah said that Israel had become a "degenerate and wild vine" (Jeremiah 2:21). When Jesus calls himself the true vine he makes clear that no one can claim their spiritual inheritance through association with a particular people or bloodline. Rather, it is only through Jesus Christ that one can become grafted into the true "vineyard of the Lord".

Prayer: O God, restorer and lover of innocence, direct the hearts of your servants towards yourself, that those you have set free from the darkness of unbelief may never stray from the light of your truth. 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.

Contemplation: Jesus offers true life – the abundant life which comes from God and which results in great fruitfulness. How does the vine become fruitful? The vinedresser must carefully prune the vine before it can bear good fruit. Vines characteristically have two kinds of branches – those which bear fruit and those which don't. The non-bearing branches must be carefully pruned back in order for the vine to conserve its strength for bearing good fruit. Jesus used this image to describe the kind of life he produces in those who are united with him – the fruit of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). Jesus says there can be no fruit in our lives apart from him. The fruit he speaks of here is the fruit

of the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23). There is a simple truth here: We are either fruit-bearing or non-fruit-bearing. There is no in-between. But the bearing of healthy fruit requires drastic pruning. The Lord promises that we will bear much fruit if we abide in him and allow him to purify us. Do you trust in the Lord's abiding presence with you?

Thursday, May 7 ~ Fifth Week in the Season of Easter

Holy Gospel: John 15:9-11 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."

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 outgive 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, by whose grace, though sinners, we are made just and, though pitiable, made blessed, stand, we pray, by your works, stand by your gifts, that those justified by faith may not lack the courage of perseverance. 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?

Friday, May 8 ~ Fifth Week in the Season of Easter

Holy Gospel: John 15:12-17 Jesus said to his disciples: "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: Jesus defines friendship, the mutual bond of trust and affection between two or more people, as the willingness to give totally of oneself even to the point of dying for one's friends. How is such love possible or even desirable? God made us in love for love. That is our reason for being, our purpose for living, and our goal in dying. God is love and everything he does flows from his love for us. He loved us so much, some might even mistakenly say too much, by giving us the best of all gifts, the offering of his beloved Son who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. God gave up his Son so that we might become his sons and daughters, his adopted children (Romans 8:14-17).

Prayer: Grant us, Lord, we pray, that, being rightly conformed to the paschal mysteries, what we celebrate in joy may protect and save us with perpetual power. 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 called his disciples his "friends." Jesus not only showed his disciples that he cared for them. He enjoyed their company. He ate with them, shared everything he had with them – even his most intimate thoughts. And he spent himself doing good for them. To know Jesus is to know God and to understand the love and friendship God offers each one of us. One of the special marks of favor shown in the scriptures is to be called the friend of God. Abraham is called the "friend of God" (Isaiah 41:8). God speaks with Moses "as a man speaks with his friend" (Exodus 33:11). Jesus, the Lord and Master, in turn, calls the disciples his "friends" rather than his servants. Friendship with God certainly entails a loving relationship which goes beyond mere duty and obedience. Friendship is based on love, and love must be reciprocal. Do you love Christ as much as he loves you? If not, why not?

Saturday, May 9 ~ Fifth Week in the Season of Easter

Holy Gospel: John 15:18-21 Jesus said to his disciples: "If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you, 'No slave is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. And they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me."

Meditation: What does Jesus mean when he says "you are not of this world"? The "world" in scripture refers to that society of people who are hostile towards God and opposed to his will. The world rejected Jesus, and his disciples can expect the same treatment. Jesus leaves no middle ground for his followers. We are either for him or against him, for his kingdom of light or for the kingdom of darkness. The prophet Isaiah warned that people who separate themselves from God because of their rebellion and spiritual blindness would end up calling evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20).

Prayer: Almighty and eternal God, who through the regenerating power of Baptism have been pleased to confer on us heavenly life, grant, we pray, that those you render capable of immortality by justifying them may by your guidance attain the fullness of glory. 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: If we want to live in the light of God's truth, how can we rightly distinguish good from evil? True love of God and his ways draw us to all that is lovely, truthful and good. If we truly love God then we will submit to his truth and will for our lives. A friend of God cannot expect to be a friend of the world because the world opposes God. Jesus' demand is unequivocal and without compromise. Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15). We must make a choice either for or against God. Do you seek to please God in all your thoughts, actions, and relationships? Let the Holy Spirit fill your heart with the love of God (Romans 5:5).

Marian Prayer + The Angelus

*The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary:
And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.*

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;
blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*

*Behold the handmaid of the Lord: Be it done unto me according to Thy word.
Hail Mary...*

*And the Word was made Flesh: And dwelt among us.
Hail Mary...*

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

*Let us pray: Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord.
Amen.*

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