

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 August is dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

“The rosary is the most excellent form of prayer and the most efficacious means of attaining eternal life. It is the remedy for all our evils, the root of all our blessings. There is no more excellent way of praying.” +POPE LEO XIII ~ “THE ROSARY POPE”

Monday, August 11 ~ Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time Memorial of Saint Clare, Virgin

Holy Gospel: Matthew 17:22-27 As Jesus and his disciples were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is to be handed over to men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.” And they were overwhelmed with grief. When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax approached Peter and said, “Does not your teacher pay the temple tax?” “Yes,” he said. When he came into the house, before he had time to speak, Jesus asked him, “What is your opinion, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take tolls or census tax? From their subjects or from foreigners?” When he said, “From foreigners,” Jesus said to him, “Then the subjects are exempt. But that we may not offend them, go to the sea, drop in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up. Open its mouth and you will find a coin worth twice the temple tax. Give that to them for me and for you.”

Meditation: On three different occasions the Gospels record that Jesus predicted he would endure great suffering through betrayal, rejection, and the punishment of a cruel death. The Jews resorted to stoning and the Romans to crucifixion – the most painful and humiliating death they could devise for criminals they wanted to eliminate. No wonder the apostles were greatly distressed at such a prediction! If Jesus their Master were put to death, then they would likely receive the same treatment by their enemies. Jesus called himself the “Son of Man” because this was a common Jewish title for the Messiah. Why must the Messiah be rejected and killed? Did not God promise that his Anointed One would deliver his people from their oppression and establish a kingdom of peace and justice? The prophet Isaiah had foretold that it was God's will that the “Suffering Servant” make atonement for sins through his suffering and death. Jesus paid the price for our redemption with his blood. Slavery to sin is to want the wrong things and to be in bondage to destructive desires. The ransom Jesus paid sets us free from the worst tyranny possible – the tyranny of sin and the fear of death. Jesus' victory did not end with death but triumphed over the tomb. Jesus defeated the powers of death through his resurrection.

Prayer: O God, who in your mercy led Saint Clare to a love of poverty, grant, through her intercession, that, following Christ in poverty of spirit, we may merit to contemplate you one day in the heavenly Kingdom. 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: No one is overly fond of paying taxes, especially when one thinks they might be unreasonable or unjust. And yet taxes provide much in the way of necessary services. Jesus and his disciples were confronted by tax collectors on the issue of tax evasion. When questioned about paying the temple tax, Jesus replied to his disciples: We must pay so as not to cause bad example. In fact, we must go beyond our duty in order that we may show others what they ought to do. The scriptural expression to give no offense doesn't refer to insult or annoyance; rather it means to put no stumbling block in the way of another that would cause them to trip or fall. Jesus would not allow himself anything which might possibly be a bad example to someone else. Do you evade unpleasant responsibilities or obligations?

Tuesday, August 12 ~ Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time Optional Memorial: Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, Religious

Holy Gospel: Matthew 18:1-5, 10, 12-14 The disciples approached Jesus and said, “Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?” He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, “Amen, I say

to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me. See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father. What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost."

Meditation: Do you find yourself somewhat surprised to see the disciples discussing with Jesus who is the greatest? Have each of us not done the same thing at some point in our lives? The appetite for glory and greatness seems to be inbred in us on one level or another. Even the psalms speak about the glory God has destined for us: "you have made them little less than a god, crowned them with glory and honor." (ref. Psalm 8:6). Jesus made a dramatic gesture by placing a child next to himself to show his disciples who really is the greatest in the kingdom of God. What can a little child possibly teach us about greatness? Children in the ancient world had no rights, position, or privileges of their own. They were socially at the "bottom of the rung" and at the service of their parents, much like the household staff and domestic servants. What is the significance of Jesus' gesture? Jesus elevated a little child in the presence of his disciples by placing the child in a privileged position of honor at his right side.

Prayer: O God, who made Saint Jane Frances de Chantal radiant with outstanding merits in different walks of life, grant us, through her intercession, that walking faithfully in our vocation, we may constantly be examples of shining light. 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, then, who is the greatest in God's kingdom? The one who is humble of heart, who instead of asserting their rights willingly, empties themselves of pride and self-seeking glory by taking the lowly position of a servant or child – and they do so by imitating Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity. Remember the words of Saint Benedict: "The first step of humility is unhesitating obedience, which comes naturally to those who cherish Christ above all."

Wednesday, August 13 ~ Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Optional Memorial: Saints Pontian, Pope and Martyr, and Hippolytus, Priest and Martyr

Holy Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20 Jesus said to his disciples: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell the Church. If he refuses to listen even to the Church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again, amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Meditation: We've all been wronged by someone. When we are in that situation, Jesus says the first step is to speak directly but privately to the individual who has done the harm. One of the worst things we can do is brood over our grievance. This can poison the mind and heart and, thus "spin us up" and make it more difficult to go directly to the person who caused the damage. If we truly want to settle a difference with someone, we need to do it face to face. If this fails in its purpose, then the second step is to bring another person or persons, someone who is wise and gracious rather than someone who is hot-tempered or judgmental. The goal is not so much to put the offender on trial, but to persuade the offender to see the wrong and to be reconciled.

Prayer: May the precious long-suffering of the just, O Lord, we pray, bring us a great increase of love for you and always prompt in our hearts constancy in the holy 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: Saint Augustine had this to say about today's Gospel: "If someone has done you injury and you have suffered, what should be done? You have heard the answer already in today's scripture: 'If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.' If you fail to do so, you are worse than he is. He has done someone harm, and by doing harm he has stricken himself with a grievous wound. Will you then completely disregard your brother's wound? Will you simply watch him stumble and fall down? Will you disregard his predicament? If so, you are worse in your silence than he in his abuse. Therefore, when any one sins against us, let us take great care, but not merely for ourselves."

For it is a glorious thing to forget injuries. Just set aside your own injury, but do not neglect your brother's wound." So what's holding you back from doing as Christ instructed? Not human pride!

Thursday, August 14 ~ Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Memorial: Saint Maximilian Kolbe, Priest and Martyr

Visit the National Shrine of Saint Maximilian Kolbe: <https://kolbeshrine.org/>

Holy Gospel: Matthew 18:21-19:1 Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart." When Jesus finished these words, he left Galilee and went to the district of Judea across the Jordan.

Meditation: Jesus teaches that one must forgive in order to be forgiven, no matter how many times. If we do not forgive our fellow human being we cannot expect God to forgive us as many times as we approach God for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. James says that "judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy" (James 2:13). Mercy is truly a gift and it is offered in such a way that justice is not negated. C.S. Lewis once wrote: "Mercy will flower only when it grows in the crannies of the rock of Justice: transplanted to the marshlands of mere Humanitarianism, it becomes a man-eating weed, all the more dangerous because it is still called by the same name as the mountain variety."

Prayer: O God, who filled the Priest and Martyr Saint Maximilian Kolbe with a burning love for the Immaculate Virgin Mary and with zeal for souls and love of neighbor, graciously grant, through his intercession, that striving for your glory by eagerly serving others, we may be conformed, even until death, to your Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: When Peter posed the question of forgiveness, he characteristically offered an answer he thought Jesus would be pleased with. Why not forgive seven times! How unthinkable for Jesus to counter with the proposition that one must forgive seventy times that. Jesus made it clear that there is no reckonable limit to forgiveness. And he drove the lesson home with a parable about two very different kinds of debts. The first man owed an enormous sum of money – millions in our modern currency. In Jesus' time this amount was greater than the total revenue of a province – more than it would cost to ransom a king! The man who was forgiven such an incredible debt could not, however bring himself to forgive his neighbor a very small debt which was fraction of his own debt. The contrast could not have been greater. If God has forgiven each of us our debt, which was very great, we, too must forgive others the debt they owe us.



Friday, August 15 ~ Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time
Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
~ A Holy Day of Obligation ~



Holy Gospel: Luke 1:39-56 Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit

rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, and has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever." Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Meditation: Have you ever spent time examining how strong your hope is in the promises of God? Mary is a model of faith and hope for us. And she is among "the first-fruits" of "all those who belong to Jesus" and who share in his triumph (1 Cor.15:20-24). What enabled Mary to grow in faith and to persevere in hope in the face of obstacles and trials? The Gospel of Luke reveals the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in Mary's life. When Elizabeth and Mary greeted one another they were filled with the Holy Spirit and with a joyful anticipation of the fulfillment of God's promise to give a Savior. John the Baptist, even before the birth of the Messiah, pointed to his coming and leapt for joy in the womb of his mother as the Holy Spirit revealed to him the presence of the King to be born.

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, who assumed the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mother of your Son, body and soul into heavenly glory, grant we pray, that, always attentive to the things that are above, we may merit to be sharers of her glory. 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 Holy Spirit is God's gift to us to enable us to know and experience the indwelling presence of God and the power of his kingdom. The Holy Spirit is the way in which God reigns within each of us. The Blessed Virgin Mary accepted her mission with uncompromising faith and obedience. She did not pause, stop to think, or say "Let me get back with you." She acted with unwavering trust and faith because she believed that God would fulfill the word he had spoken. Her great hymn of praise echoes the song of Hannah (ref. 1 Samuel 2:1-10) and proclaims the favor of the Lord: God exalts the lowly and he fills the hungry. The Holy Spirit is always at the ready to renew your faith and hope in God's promises and to make you strong in love for God and your neighbor. Do you live in the joy and confidence of God's indwelling presence with you through his Holy Spirit? If not, today is a wonderful day to begin.

About this Solemnity: The Assumption is the oldest feast day of Our Lady, but we don't know how it first came to be celebrated. Its origin is lost in those days when Jerusalem was restored as a sacred city, at the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine (c. 285-337). By then it had been a pagan city for two centuries, ever since Emperor Hadrian (76-138) had leveled it around the year 135 and rebuilt it as Aelia Capitolina in honor of Jupiter. For 200 years, every memory of Jesus was obliterated from the city, and the sites made holy by His life, death and Resurrection became pagan temples. After the building of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 336, the sacred sites began to be restored and memories of the life of Our Lord began to be celebrated by the people of Jerusalem. One of the memories about his mother centered around the "Tomb of Mary," close to Mount Zion, where the early Christian community had lived. On the hill itself was the "Place of Dormition," the spot of Mary's "falling asleep," where she had died. The "Tomb of Mary" was where she was buried. At this time, the "Memory of Mary" was being celebrated. Later it was to become our feast of the Assumption. The Assumption completes God's work in her since it was not fitting that the flesh that had given life to God himself should ever undergo corruption. The Assumption is God's crowning of His work as Mary ends her earthly life and enters eternity. The feast turns our eyes in that direction, where we will follow when our earthly life is over. The feast days of the Church are not just the commemoration of historical events; they do not look only to the past. They look to the present and to the future and give us an insight into our own relationship with God. The Assumption looks to eternity and gives us hope that we, too, will follow Our Lady when our life is ended. In 1950, in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the Assumption of Mary a dogma of the Catholic Church in these words: "The Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heaven." With that, an ancient belief became Catholic doctrine and the Assumption was declared a truth revealed by God.

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