

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 April is dedicated to the Holy Spirit

The month of May is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary

“The way of Christian perfection begins with a personal summons, addressed to the individual Christian by Christ the Lord, through the Holy Spirit. This summons is a call, a ‘vocation.’ Every Christian in one way or another receives this vocation from Christ – the call to follow Him.” ~Excerpted from *LIFE AND HOLINESS* by Father Thomas Merton, OCSO

Monday, April 27 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Easter

Holy Gospel: John 10:11-18 Jesus said: “I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father.”

Meditation: The peace and security of the Good Shepherd – Jesus Christ, who watches over us as members of his flock – is something that we can find great comfort and joy. The Old Testament often speaks of God as shepherd of his people, Israel. *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want* (Psalm 23:1). *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!* (Psalm 80:1) *We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture* (Psalm 100:3). The Messiah is also pictured as the shepherd of God's people: *He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms* (Isaiah 40:11). In the New Testament Jesus lets us know that he is the *Good Shepherd* who will risk his life to seek out and save the stray sheep (Matthew 18:12, Luke 15:4). He is the *Shepherd and Guardian of our souls* (1 Peter 2:25).

Prayer: O God, perfect light of the blessed, by whose gift we celebrate the paschal mysteries on earth, bring us, we pray, to rejoice in the full measure of your grace for ages unending. 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 made three promises to those who take up his two word invitation – “Follow me.” To those who follow Christ he promised them everlasting life. If they accept him and follow him, they will have the life of God in them. Jesus also promised them a life that would know no end. Death would not be the end but the beginning; they would know the glory of indestructible life. Jesus promised a life that was secure. Jesus said that nothing would snatch them out of his hand, not even sorrow and death, since he is everlasting life itself. Our lives are safe in his hands.

Tuesday, April 28 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Easter

**Optional Memorials: Saint Peter Chanel, Priest & Martyr;
Saint Louis Mary de Montfort, Priest**

Holy Gospel: John 10:22-30 The feast of the Dedication was taking place in Jerusalem. It was winter. And Jesus walked about in the temple area on the Portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you and you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify to me. But you do not believe, because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out

of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

Meditation: Saint Cyril, a Father of the Church, comments on Jesus as our Good Shepherd: "He shows in what manner a shepherd may be proved good; and He teaches that he must be prepared to give up his life fighting in defense of his sheep, which was fulfilled in Christ. For man has departed from the love of God, and fallen into sin, and because of this was, I say, excluded from the divine abode of paradise, and when he was weakened by that disaster, he yielded to the devil tempting him to sin, and death following that sin he became the prey of fierce and ravenous wolves. But after Christ was announced as the True Shepherd of all men, He laid down his life for us (1 John 3:16), fighting for us against that pack of inhuman beasts. He bore the Cross for us, that by His own death he might destroy death. He was condemned for us, that He might deliver all of us from the sentence of punishment: the tyranny of sin being overthrown by our faith: fastening to the Cross the decree that stood against us, as it is written (Colossians 2:14). Therefore as the father of sin had as it were shut up the sheep in hell, giving them to death to feed on, as it is written in the psalms (Ps. XLviii.16), He died for us as truly Good, and truly our Shepherd, so that the dark shadow of death driven away He might join us to the company of the blessed in heaven; and in exchange for abodes that lie far in the depths of the pit, and in the hidden places of the sea, grant us mansions in His Father's House above. Because of this he says to us in another place: Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom (Luke 12:32)."

Prayer: Grant, we pray, almighty God, that, celebrating the mysteries of the Lord's Resurrection, we may merit to receive the joy of our redemption. 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 Peter Chanel: O God, who for the spreading of your Church crowned Saint Peter Chanel with martyrdom, grant that, in these days of paschal joy, we may so celebrate the mysteries of Christ's Death and Resurrection as to bear worthy witness to newness of 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 + Saint Louis de Montfort: O God, who willed to direct the steps of the Priest Saint Louis along the way of salvation and of the love of Christ, in the company of the Blessed Virgin, grant us, by his example, that, meditating on the mysteries of your love, we may strive tirelessly for the building up of your Church. 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 promises the security of peace and protection from evil and the greatest harm that could befall us – eternal destruction. The Lord does not spare us from all trouble. In this life we will experience pain, suffering, sickness, and death. But through these the Lord will lead us to ultimate victory and safety in his everlasting home. Even in the midst of our sufferings we can find a peace and security which no one can give except God alone. We can confidently follow the Lord wherever he leads, trusting that nothing can keep us from God *if* we trust in him. Which begs the question: Have you placed your life securely in God where it belongs?

Wednesday, April 29 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Easter Saint Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor of the Church

Holy Gospel: John 12:44-50 Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness. And if anyone hears my words and does not observe them, I do not condemn him, for I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world. Whoever rejects me and does not accept my words has something to judge him: the word that I spoke, it will condemn him on the last day, because I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. So what I say, I say as the Father told me."

Meditation: God does not leave us in our ignorance and unbelief. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit he helps us to grow in faith, knowledge and understanding of his word. Saint Augustine summed up rather succinctly our need for God's help in the following prayer: "God our Father, we find it difficult to come to you, because our knowledge of you is imperfect. In our ignorance we have imagined you to be our enemy; we have wrongly thought that you take pleasure in punishing our sins; and we have foolishly conceived you to be a tyrant over human life. But since Jesus came among us, he has shown that you are loving, and that our resentment against you was groundless." Do you want to know more of God and his transforming love? Look to Jesus, the Light of God, and in his truth you will find joy, freedom, and wholeness of mind, body and soul.

Prayer: O God, who set Saint Catherine of Siena on fire with divine love in her contemplation of the Lord's Passion and her service to your Church, grant, through her intercession, that your people, participating in the mystery of Christ, may ever exult in the revelation of his glory. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Contemplation: To see Jesus is to see God. To hear his words is to hear the voice of God. He is the very light of God that has power to overcome the darkness of sin, ignorance, and unbelief. God's light and truth brings healing, pardon, and transformation. This light is not only for the chosen people of Israel, but for the whole world as well. Jesus warns that if we refuse his word or take it lightly, we choose to remain in spiritual darkness. Jesus made it clear that he did not come to condemn us, but rather to bring abundant life and freedom from the oppression of sin, ignorance and evil. We condemn ourselves when we reject God's wisdom and truth. It is one thing to live in ignorance due to lack of knowledge, but another thing to disdain those who teach us true wisdom and knowledge. Jesus says that his word which we have heard will be our judge. Do you believe that God's word has power to change and transform your life?

Thursday, April 30 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Easter
Optional Memorial: Pope Saint Pius V

Holy Gospel: John 13:16-20 When Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, he said to them: "Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it. I am not speaking of all of you. I know those whom I have chosen. But so that the Scripture might be fulfilled,

The one who ate my food has raised his heel against me.

From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

Meditation: Jesus loved his disciples to the end and proved his faithfulness to them even to death on the cross. Through his death and resurrection Jesus opened a new way of relationship and friendship with God. Jesus tells his disciples that if they accept him they also accept the Father who sent him. This principle extends to all who belong to Christ and who speak in his name. To accept the Lord's messenger is to accept Jesus himself. The great honor and the great responsibility any Christian has is to stand in the world for Jesus Christ. As his disciples and ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20), we are called to speak for him and to act on his behalf. Are you ready to stand for Jesus at the cross of humiliation, rejection, opposition, and suffering?

Prayer: O God, who restore human nature to yet greater dignity than at its beginnings, look upon the amazing mystery of your loving kindness, and in those you have chosen to make new through the wonder of rebirth may you preserve the gifts of your enduring grace and blessing. 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.

Prayer + Pope Saint Pius V: O God, who in your providence raised up Pope Saint Pius the Fifth in your Church that the faith might be safeguarded and more fitting worship be offered to you, grant, through his intercession, that we may participate in your mysteries with lively faith and fruitful charity. 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: Have you ever given any thought as to how you treat those who cause you grief or harm? Especially those who are close to you in some way? In his last supper discourse, Jesus addressed the issue of fidelity and disloyalty in relationships. Jesus knew beforehand that one of his own disciples would betray him. Such knowledge could have easily led Jesus to distance himself from such a person and to protect himself from harm's way. Instead, Jesus expresses his love, affection, and loyalty to those who were his own, even to the one he knew would "stab him in the back" when he got the opportunity. Jesus used a quotation from Psalm 4:9 which describes an act of treachery by one's closest friend. In the culture of Jesus' day, to eat bread with someone was a gesture of friendship and trust. Jesus extends such friendship to Judas right at the moment when Judas is conspiring to betray his master. The expression "raised his heel against me" reinforces the brute nature of this act of violent rejection.

Friday, May 1 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Easter
Saint Joseph the Worker

Holy Gospel: Matthew 13:54-58 Jesus came to his native place and taught the people in their synagogue. They were astonished and said, "Where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds? Is he not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother named Mary and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and

Judas? Are not his sisters all with us? Where did this man get all this?" And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and in his own house." And he did not work many mighty deeds there because of their lack of faith.

Meditation: The liturgy for this feast vindicates the right to work, and this is a message that needs to be heard and heeded in our modern society. In many of the documents issued by Pope Saint John XXIII, Pope Blessed Paul VI, the Second Vatican Council and Pope Saint John Paul II, reference is made to the Christian spirit that should permeate one's work, after the example of Saint Joseph, recognizing that all of our gifts and talents are gifts to us from God, and should be used to help build up His kingdom here on earth. In addition to this, there is a special dignity and value to the work done in caring for the human family.

Prayer: O God, Creator of all things, who laid down for the human race the law of work, graciously grant that by the example of Saint Joseph and under his patronage we may complete the works you set us to do and attain the rewards you promise. 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 Saint Joseph for Employment: Dear Saint Joseph, you were yourself once faced with the responsibility of providing the necessities of life for Jesus and Mary. Look down with fatherly compassion upon me in my anxiety with my present inability to support my family. Please help me find gainful employment very soon, so that this great burden of concern will be lifted from my heart and that I am soon able to provide for those whom God has entrusted to my care. Help me guard against discouragement, so that I may emerge from this trial spiritually enriched and with even greater blessings from God. Amen.

Contemplation (in relation to today's feast): Do you find yourself in need of prayer looking for work these days? The Prayer to Saint Joseph for Employment (above) is presented today in the hope it might provide some relief and comfort to those who find themselves in this situation. Do not despair! Seek this great Saint's help in carrying the vexing and at times quite bitter cross of being out of work, remembering always that you always have great worth in the eyes of God no matter what your situation may be.

Contemplation: Worth contemplating on this Feast is a brief excerpt from a document of the Second Vatican Council "The Church in the Modern World" – *Gaudium et Spes* – which notes: "Throughout the course of the centuries, men have labored to better the circumstances of their lives through a monumental amount of individual and collective effort. To believers, this point is settled: considered in itself, this human activity accords with God's will. For man, created to God's image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness; a mandate to relate himself and the totality of things to Him Who was to be acknowledged as the Lord and Creator of all. Thus, by the subjection of all things to man, the name of God would be wonderful in all the earth" (No. 34).

About today's Feast: "May Day" has long been dedicated to labor and the working man. It falls on the first day of the month that is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Pope Pius XII expressed the hope that this feast would accentuate the dignity of labor and would bring a spiritual dimension to labor unions. It is eminently fitting that Saint Joseph, a working man who became the foster-father of Christ and patron of the Universal Church, should be honored on this day. The texts of the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours provide a catechetical synthesis of the significance of human labor seen in the light of faith. The Opening Prayer states that God, the creator and ruler of the universe, has called men and women in every age to develop and use their talents for the good of others. Then, in the second part of the Opening Prayer, we ask that we may do the work that God has asked of us and come to the rewards he has promised. In many of the documents issued by Pope Saint John XXIII, Pope Saint Paul VI, the Second Vatican Council and Pope Saint John Paul II, reference is made to the Christian spirit that should permeate one's work, after the example of Saint Joseph.

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