

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 June is dedicated to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

“In her voyage across the ocean of this world, the Church is like a great ship being pounded by the waves of life’s different stresses. Our duty is not to abandon ship but to keep her on her course. Since the truth can be assaulted but never defeated or falsified, with our tired mind let us turn to the words of Solomon: Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own prudence. Think on him in all your ways, and he will guide your steps. In another place he says: The name of the Lord is an impregnable tower. The just man seeks refuge in it and he will be saved. Let us stand fast in what is right and prepare our souls for trial. Let us wait upon God’s strengthening aid and say to him: O Lord, you have been our refuge in all generations. Let us trust in him who has placed this burden upon us. What we ourselves cannot bear let us bear with the help of Christ. For he is all-powerful and he tells us: My yoke is easy and my burden is light. Let us continue the fight on the day of the Lord. The days of anguish and of tribulation have overtaken us; if God so wills, let us die for the holy laws of our fathers, so that we may deserve to obtain an eternal inheritance with them.” +SAINT BONIFACE

Monday, June 1 ~ Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 12:1-12 Jesus began to speak to the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders in parables. “A man planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers and left on a journey. At the proper time he sent a servant to the tenants to obtain from them some of the produce of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant. And that one they beat over the head and treated shamefully. He sent yet another whom they killed. So, too, many others; some they beat, others they killed. He had one other to send, a beloved son. He sent him to them last of all, thinking, ‘They will respect my son.’ But those tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they seized him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come, put the tenants to death, and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read this Scripture passage:

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes?”

They were seeking to arrest him, but they feared the crowd, for they realized that he had addressed the parable to them. So they left him and went away.

Meditation: This parable speaks to each of us today as well. For it conveys 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. But while the tenants take advantage of the owner's patience, his judgment and justice prevail in the end. 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. How do we share in this glory? By submitting to Jesus' kingly rule in our lives. Jesus promises that we will bear much fruit (certainly the fruit of peace, righteousness, and joy, and much more besides) if we abide in him (see John 15:1-11). The Lord also entrusts his gifts 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. Do you labor for the Lord with joyful hope and with confidence in his triumph?

Prayer: Graciously grant to your Church, O merciful God, that, gathered by the Holy Spirit, she may be devoted to you with all her heart and united in purity of intent. 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 does Jesus' parable about an absentee landlord and his tenants say to us? The hills of Galilee were lined with numerous vineyards, and it was quite normal for the owners to let out their estates to tenants. Many did it for the sole purpose of collecting rent. Why did Jesus' story about wicked tenants cause offense to the scribes and Pharisees? It contained both a prophetic message and a warning. Isaiah had spoken of the house of Israel as "the vineyard of the Lord" (ref. Isaiah 5:7). Jesus' listeners would likely understand this parable as referring to God's dealing with a stubborn and rebellious people.

Tuesday, June 2 ~ Ninth Week in Ordinary Time
Optional Memorial: Saints Marcellinus and Peter, Martyrs

Holy Gospel: Mark 12:13-17 Some Pharisees and Herodians were sent to Jesus to ensnare him in his speech. They came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you are not concerned with anyone's opinion. You do not regard a person's status but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or should we not pay?" Knowing their hypocrisy he said to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at." They brought one to him and he said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They replied to him, "Caesar's." So Jesus said to them, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." They were utterly amazed at him.

Meditation: What do we owe God and what's our obligation towards others? Paul the Apostle tells us that we must give each what is their due (ref. Romans 13:6-8). The Jewish authorities sought to trap Jesus in a religious-state dispute over the issue of taxes. The Jews resented their foreign rulers and despised paying taxes to Cesar. They posed a dilemma to test Jesus to see if he would make a statement they could use against him. If Jesus answered that it was lawful to pay taxes to a pagan ruler, then he would lose credibility with the Jewish populace who would regard him as a coward and a friend of Cesar. If he said it was not lawful, then the Pharisees would have grounds to report him to the Roman authorities as a political trouble-maker and have him arrested. Jesus avoided their trap by confronting them with the image of a coin. Coinage in the ancient world had significant political power. Rulers issued coins with their own image and inscription on them. In a certain sense the coin was regarded as the personal property of the ruler. Where the coin was valid the ruler held political sway over the people. Since the Jews used the Roman currency, Jesus explained that what belonged to Caesar must be given to Caesar.

Prayer: May the power of the Holy Spirit come to us, we pray, O Lord, that we may keep your will faithfully in mind and express it in a devout way 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 Marcellinus and Peter: O God, who surround us with protection through the glorious confession of the Martyrs Saints Marcellinus and Peter, grant that we may profit by imitating them and be upheld by their prayer. 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: This passage has another deeper meaning as well. We, too, have been stamped with God's image since we are created in his own likeness (ref. Genesis 1:26-27). We rightfully belong, not to ourselves, but to God who created us and redeemed us in the precious blood of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (ref. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Paul the Apostle says that we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God (ref. Romans 12:1). Do you acknowledge that your life belongs to God and not to yourself? And do you give to God what rightfully belongs to Him?

Wednesday, June 3 ~ Ninth Week in Ordinary Time
Memorial: Saint Charles Lwanga and Companions, Martyrs

Holy Gospel: Mark 12:18-27 Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus and put this question to him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us, *If someone's brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up descendants for his brother.*

Now there were seven brothers. The first married a woman and died, leaving no descendants. So the second brother married her and died, leaving no descendants, and the third likewise. And the seven left no descendants. Last of all the woman also died. At the resurrection when they arise whose wife will she

be? For all seven had been married to her." Jesus said to them, "Are you not misled because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but they are like the angels in heaven. As for the dead being raised, have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God told him, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?* He is not God of the dead but of the living. You are greatly misled."

Meditation: Among the many problems of the Sadducees, they could not conceive of heaven beyond what they could see with their own eyes. Are we not often like them? We often don't recognize spiritual realities because we try to make heaven into an earthly image. The Sadducees came to Jesus with a test question to make the resurrection look ridiculous. The Sadducees, unlike the Pharisees, did not believe in immortality, nor in angels or evil spirits. Their religion was literally grounded in an earthly image of heaven. Jesus retorts by dealing with the fact of the resurrection. The scriptures give proof of it. In Exodus 3:6, God calls himself the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He defeats their arguments by showing that God is a living God of a living people. God was the friend of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when they lived. That friendship could not cease with death.

Prayer: O God, who have made the blood of Martyrs the seed of Christians, mercifully grant that the field which is your Church, watered by the blood shed by Saint Charles Lwanga and his companions, may be fertile and always yield you an abundant harvest. 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: As Psalm 73:23-24 states: "I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory." The Holy Spirit reveals to us the eternal truths of God's unending love and the life he desires to share with us for all eternity. Paul the Apostle, quoting from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 64:4; 65:17) states: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him," God has revealed to us through the Spirit (ref. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10). The promise of paradise – heavenly bliss and unending life with an all-loving God – is beyond human reckoning. We have only begun to taste the first-fruits! Do you believe the scriptures? If so, do you know the power of the Holy Spirit?

Thursday, June 4 ~ Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Mark 12:28-34 One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this:

Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

The second is this:

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

There is no other commandment greater than these." The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying,

He is One and there is no other than he. And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Meditation: What is the purpose of God's law or commandments? The Pharisees prided themselves in the knowledge of the law and their ritual requirements. They made it a life-time practice to study the 613 precepts of the Old Testament along with the numerous rabbinic commentaries. They tested Jesus to see if he correctly understood the law as they did. Jesus startled them with his profound simplicity and mastery of the law of God and its purpose. What does God require of us? Simply that we love as he loves! God is love and everything he does flows from his love for us. God loved us first and our love for him is a response to his exceeding grace and kindness towards us. The love of God comes first and the love of neighbor is firmly grounded in the love of God. The more we know of God's love and truth the more we love what he loves and reject what is hateful and contrary to his will.

Prayer: O God, strength of those who hope in you, graciously hear our pleas, and, since without you mortal frailty can do nothing, grant us always the help of your grace, that in following your commands we may please you by our resolve and our deeds. 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 makes our love for God and his commands grow in us? Faith in God and hope in his promises strengthens us in the love of God. They are essential for a good relationship with God, for

being united with him. The more we know of God the more we love him and the more we love him the greater we believe and hope in his promises. The Lord, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, gives us a new freedom to love as he loves. So ask yourself: Do you allow anything to keep you from the love of God and the joy of serving others with a generous heart? Paul the Apostle says: hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (ref. Romans 5:5). Do you know the love which conquers all?

Friday, June 5 ~ Ninth Week in Ordinary Time
Memorial: Saint Boniface, Bishop and Martyr ~ the "Apostle of Germany"

Holy Gospel: Mark 12:35-37 As Jesus was teaching in the temple area he said, "How do the scribes claim that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, said:

The Lord said to my lord,

'Sit at my right hand

until I place your enemies under your feet.'

David himself calls him 'lord'; so how is he his son?" The great crowd heard this with delight.

Meditation: Do you acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord over all? It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make Christ known to us. That is why Jesus stated that King David could proclaim that his future heir would be both Messiah (the Hebrew word for Christ or the Anointed One) and his Lord. Among the Jews the most common title for the Messiah was the Son of David. The Jews looked forward to the long-expected Savior who would come from the line of David. Jesus was often addressed with that title, especially by the crowds (Mark 10:47ff, Matthew 9:27; 12:23). Jesus not only asserts that the Messiah is David's son, and that he is, indeed, David's son, but, that he is not only David's son, but also his Lord. Paul the Apostle states that no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Prayer: May the Martyr Saint Boniface be our advocate, O Lord, that we may firmly hold the faith he taught with his lips and sealed in his blood and confidently profess it by our deeds. 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 real thought to what it means when you acknowledge that Jesus is Lord? The word *Lord* means "ruler" or "king" – the one who is owed "fealty" and "submission". The Lord or Master of our lives is the person or thing we give our lives over to or submit to in a full way. We can be ruled by many things – our unruly passions, the love of money, alcohol, drugs, etc. Only one Lord can truly set us free to love and to be loved as God intended from the beginning. When we acknowledge that Jesus is Lord we invite him to be the king of our heart and the ruler of our thoughts, relationships, and all that we do. Is the Lord Jesus the true king of your heart and mind? Do you give him free reign in every area of your life?

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The Month of June ~ Dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus
Intercessory Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

O Lord Jesus Christ, to Your Most Sacred Heart I confide this intention
{**name petition**}. Only look upon me, then do what Your love inspires.

Let Your Sacred Heart decide. I count on You. I trust in You.

I throw myself on Your mercy. Lord Jesus, You will not fail me.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in You. Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Your love for me. Sacred Heart of Jesus, Your kingdom come. Sacred Heart of Jesus,

I have asked You for many favors, but I earnestly implore this one.

Take it, I pray, and place it in Your open Heart.

When the Eternal Father looks upon it, He will see it covered with Your Precious Blood. It will be no longer be my prayer, but Yours, Jesus. Sacred Heart of Jesus,
I place all my trust in You. Let me not be disappointed. Amen.

