

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 March is dedicated to Saint Joseph.

“Lent is the autumn of the spiritual life, during which we gather fruit to keep us going for the rest of the year.”

+SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES, PATRON SAINT OF THE DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS

Monday, March 11 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Lent

Holy Gospel: John 4:43-54 At that time Jesus left [Samaria] for Galilee. For Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his native place. When he came into Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since they had seen all he had done in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves had gone to the feast. Then he returned to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. Now there was a royal official whose son was ill in Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, who was near death. Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe.” The royal official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” Jesus said to him, “You may go; your son will live.” The man believed what Jesus said to him and left. While the man was on his way back, his slaves met him and told him that his boy would live. He asked them when he began to recover. They told him, “The fever left him yesterday, about one in the afternoon.” The father realized that just at that time Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live,” and he and his whole household came to believe. Now this was the second sign Jesus did when he came to Galilee from Judea.

Meditation: Isaiah prophesied that God would establish a new heavens and earth when he came to restore his people. Jesus’ miracles are signs that manifest the presence and power of God’s kingdom. When a Gentile official heard the reports of Jesus’ preaching and miracles, he decided to seek Jesus out for an extraordinary favor. It took raw courage for a Gentile court official to travel twenty miles in search of Jesus, the Galilean carpenter. He had to swallow his pride and put up with some ridicule from his cronies. And when he found the healer carpenter, Jesus seemed to put him off with the blunt statement that people would not believe unless they saw some kind of miracle or sign from heaven. Jesus likely said this to test the man to see if his faith was in earnest. If he turned away discouraged or irritated, he would prove to be insincere. Jesus, perceiving his faith, sent him home with the assurance that his prayer had been heard.

Prayer: O God, who renew the world through mysteries beyond all telling, grant, we pray, that your Church may be guided by your eternal design. 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: If you think about it, it was probably not easy for this man to leave Jesus and go back home only with the assuring word that his son would be healed. Couldn't Jesus have come to this man's home and touched his dying child? The court official believed and surrendered to Jesus. He was ready to return home and face ridicule and laughter because he trusted in Jesus' word. God's mercy shows his generous love -- a love that bends down in response to our misery and wretchedness. Do you approach the Lord Jesus with the readiness to believe in his word and to do whatever he commands?

Tuesday, March 12 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Lent

Holy Gospel: John 5:1-16 There was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem at the Sheep Gate a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda, with five porticoes. In these lay a large number of ill, blind, lame, and crippled. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been ill for a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to

be well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your mat, and walk." Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked. Now that day was a Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to carry your mat." He answered them, "The man who made me well told me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who told you, 'Take it up and walk'?" The man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away, since there was a crowd there. After this Jesus found him in the temple area and said to him, "Look, you are well; do not sin any more, so that nothing worse may happen to you." The man went and told the Jews that Jesus was the one who had made him well. Therefore, the Jews began to persecute Jesus because he did this on a Sabbath.

Meditation: Water has the power to transform everything it touches – water brings life, healing, and restoration. Jesus offers himself as the source of this living water which he will pour out upon his disciples in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The signs and miracles which Jesus performed manifest the power and presence of God's kingdom and they demonstrate the love and mercy God has for his people. In the pool at Bethesda we see an individual's helplessness overcome by God's mercy and power. On this occasion Jesus singles out an incurable invalid, helpless and hopeless for almost forty years. He awakens hope when he puts a probing question to the man, "Do you really want to be healed?" And he then orders him to "get up and walk!"

Prayer: May the venerable exercises of holy devotion shape the hearts of your faithful, O Lord, to welcome worthily the Paschal Mystery and proclaim the praises of your salvation. 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: God wants to free us from the power of sin and make us whole. But he will not force our hand against our will. The first essential step towards growth and healing is the desire for change. If we are content to stay as we are, then no amount of coaxing will change us. The Lord manifests his power and saving grace towards those who desire transformation of life in Christ. The Lord approaches each of us with an important and probing question: "Do you really want to be changed, to be set free from the power of sin, and to be transformed in my holiness?" How we respond has life-long implications.

Wednesday, March 13 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Lent

Holy Gospel: John 5:17-30 Jesus answered the Jews: "My Father is at work until now, so I am at work." For this reason they tried all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath but he also called God his own father, making himself equal to God. Jesus answered and said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, the Son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for what he does, the Son will do also. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything that he himself does, and he will show him greater works than these, so that you may be amazed. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so also does the Son give life to whomever he wishes. Nor does the Father judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life. Amen, amen, I say to you, the hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he gave to the Son the possession of life in himself. And he gave him power to exercise judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, because the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation. "I cannot do anything on my own; I judge as I hear, and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me."

Meditation: God's actions always reveal to us his mercy and his justice. Do you recognize his action in your life, his saving grace and love, and the purifying fire of his Spirit who convicts us of sin and transforms us in his holiness? Jesus fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah when he brings healing, restoration, and forgiveness to those who accept his divine message. Unfortunately many people refused Jesus' message and authority to speak and act on behalf of the Father. The religious authorities charged Jesus as a "Sabbath-breaker" and as a "blasphemer". They wanted to kill Jesus because he claimed the same authority and power as God. He claimed equality with God— something no mortal could say without blaspheming. Jesus answered their charge of breaking the Sabbath law by demonstrating God's purpose for creation and redemption — to save and restore life. God's love and mercy never ceases, even on the Sabbath. Jesus continues to show the Father's mercy, even on the Sabbath day of rest. When they

charged that Jesus was making himself equal with God, he replied that he was not acting independently of God because his relationship is that of a Father and Son relationship.

Prayer: O God, who reward the merits of the just and offer pardon to sinners who do penance, have mercy, we pray, on those who call upon you, that the admission of our guilt may serve to obtain your pardon for our sins. 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: If we wish to see how God reacts to sin and how he responds to our sinful condition, then we must look to Jesus. The mind of Jesus is the mind of God, and the words of Jesus are the words of God. Jesus also states that his identity to the Father is based on complete obedience. Jesus always did what his Father wanted him to do. His obedience was not based on submission or power, but on love. The unity between Jesus and the Father is a unity of love. We are called to submit our lives to God with the same love and obedience which Jesus demonstrated for his Father. Jesus states that to accept him is life and to reject him is death. Are you ready to follow the Lord and to leave behind whatever is false and contrary to his will?

Thursday, March 14 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Lent

Holy Gospel: John 5:31-47 Jesus said to the Jews: "If I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is not true. But there is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that the testimony he gives on my behalf is true. You sent emissaries to John, and he testified to the truth. I do not accept human testimony, but I say this so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and for a while you were content to rejoice in his light. But I have testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father gave me to accomplish, these works that I perform testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. Moreover, the Father who sent me has testified on my behalf. But you have never heard his voice nor seen his form, and you do not have his word remaining in you, because you do not believe in the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think you have eternal life through them; even they testify on my behalf. But you do not want to come to me to have life. "I do not accept human praise; moreover, I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I came in the name of my Father, but you do not accept me; yet if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe, when you accept praise from one another and do not seek the praise that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father: the one who will accuse you is Moses, in whom you have placed your hope. For if you had believed Moses, you would have believed me, because he wrote about me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

Meditation: Do you know the joy of embracing the teachings and challenges in the gospel? Do you understand the joy of fully submitting yourself to Jesus Christ? Jesus' opponents refused to accept his divine authority and claim to be the only Son from the Father. They demanded evidence for his Messianic claim and equality with God. Jesus answers their charges with the supporting evidence of witnesses. The Mosaic law had laid down the principle that the unsupported evidence of one person shall not prevail against a man for any crime or wrong in connection with any offence he committed (see Deuteronomy 17:6). At least two or three witnesses were needed. Jesus begins his defense by citing John the Baptist as a witness, since John publicly pointed to Jesus as the Messiah and had repeatedly borne witness to him (see John 1:19, 20, 26, 29, 35, 36). Jesus also asserts that a greater witness to his identity are the signs he performed. He cites his works, not to point to himself but to point to the power of God working in and through him. He cites God as his supreme witness.

Prayer: We invoke your mercy in humble prayer, O Lord, that you may cause us, your servants, corrected by penance and schooled by good works, to persevere sincerely in your commands and come safely to the paschal festivities. 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 asserts that the scriptures themselves, including the books of Moses, point to himself as the Messiah, the promised Savior. The problem with the scribes and Pharisees was that they did not believe what Moses had written. They desired the praise of their fellow humans and because of that they were unable to recognize and understand the word of God. Their pride made them deaf to God's voice. God reveals himself to the lowly, to those who trust not in themselves, but in God. The Lord opens the ears of those who are eager to hear his voice and he fills their hearts and minds with his love and wisdom. Saint Augustine once said: "As Christians, our task is to make daily progress toward God. Our pilgrimage on earth is a school in which God is the only teacher, and it demands good students, not ones who play truant. In this school we learn something every day. We learn something from commandments,

something from examples, and something from sacraments. These things are remedies for our wounds and materials for study." So we must ask ourselves: Are you an eager student of God's word and do you listen to it with faith and trust? If not, why not?

Friday, March 15 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Lent

Holy Gospel: John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30 Jesus moved about within Galilee; he did not wish to travel in Judea, because the Jews were trying to kill him. But the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was near. But when his brothers had gone up to the feast, he himself also went up, not openly but as it were in secret. Some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem said, "Is he not the one they are trying to kill? And look, he is speaking openly and they say nothing to him. Could the authorities have realized that he is the Christ? But we know where he is from. When the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from." So Jesus cried out in the temple area as he was teaching and said, "You know me and also know where I am from. Yet I did not come on my own, but the one who sent me, whom you do not know, is true. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me." So they tried to arrest him, but no one laid a hand upon him, because his hour had not yet come.

Meditation: What can hold us back from doing the will of God? Fear, especially the fear of death, can easily rob us of courage and the will to do what we know is right. Jesus met opposition and the threat of death with grace and determination to accomplish his Father's will. Jesus knew that his mission, his purpose in life, would entail sacrifice and suffering and culminate with death on the cross. But that would not be the end. His "hour" would crush defeat with victory, condemnation with pardon and freedom, and death with glory and everlasting life. He willingly suffered and went to the cross for our sake, to redeem us from sin and to restore our relationship with God the Father. Saint Augustine once noted: "Our Lord had the power to lay down his life and to take it up again. But we cannot choose how long we shall live, and death comes to us even against our will. Christ, by dying, has already overcome death. Our freedom from death comes only through his death. To save us Christ had no need of us. Yet without him we can do nothing. He gave himself to us as the vine to the branches; apart from him we cannot live."

Prayer: O God, who have prepared fitting helps for us in our weakness, grant we pray, that we may receive their healing effects with joy and reflect them in a holy 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.

Contemplation: Despite how modern, sophisticated, or knowledgeable we may look upon or feel about ourselves, no one can be indifferent with Jesus for long. What he said and did – his signs and wonders – he did in the name of God. Jesus not only claimed to be the Messiah, God's Anointed One. He claimed to be in a unique relationship with God and to know him as no one else did. To the Jews this was utter blasphemy. The religious authorities did all they could to put a stop to Jesus because they could not accept his claims and the demands he made. We cannot be indifferent to the claims which Jesus makes on us. We are either for him or against him. There is no middle ground. We can try to mold Jesus to our own ideas and preferences or we can allow his word to free us from our own ignorance, stubborn pride, and deception. Do you accept all that Jesus has said and done for you with faith and reverence or with disbelief and contempt? The consequences are enormous, both in this life and in eternity.

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Daily meditations and contemplations adapted from the Irish Jesuits' *Sacred Space* web page and *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.

frlumpe:2024

A PRAYER TO SAINT JOSEPH, DURING THE MONTH OF MARCH WHICH IS DEDICATED TO SAINT JOSEPH
Glorious Saint Joseph, model of all who devote their lives to labor, obtain for me the grace to work in the spirit of penance in order thereby to atone for my many sins; to work conscientiously, setting devotion to duty in preference to my own whims; to work with thankfulness and joy, deeming it an honor to employ and to develop by my labor the gifts I have received from God; to work with order, peace, moderation, and patience, without ever shrinking from weariness and difficulties; to work above all with a pure intention and with detachment from self, having always before my eyes the hour of death and the accounting which I must then render of time ill spent, of talents wasted, of good omitted, and of vain complacency in success, which is so fatal to the work of God. All for Jesus, all through Mary, all in imitation of you, O Patriarch Joseph! This shall be my motto in life and in death. Amen.