

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)

“Behold this Heart, which has so loved men that It has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming Itself, in order to testify Its love. In return, I receive from the greater part [of humanity] only ingratitude, by their irreverence and sacrilege, and by the coldness and contempt they have for Me in this Sacrament of Love” [Holy Communion]. It is for this reason I ask thee that the first Friday after the octave of the Blessed Sacrament, be appropriated to a special feast to honor My Heart by receiving Communion on that day, and making reparation for the indignity that It [My Heart] has received. And I promise that My Heart shall dilate to pour out abundantly the influences of My Love on all who will render It this honor or will obtain My Heart being given this honor.” ~APPARITION: JESUS SPEAKING TO SAINT MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE

Monday, June 4 ~ 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: O God, whose providence never fails in its design, keep from us, we humbly beseech you, all that might harm us and grant all that works for our good. 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: 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 5 ~ Ninth Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Boniface, Bishop and Martyr ~ the "Apostle of Germany"

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 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, one 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 6 ~ Ninth Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Norbert, Bishop
Founder of the Order of Premonstretensions (the Norbertines)

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 made the Bishop Saint Norbert a servant of your Church outstanding in his prayer and pastoral zeal, grant, we ask, that by the help of his intercession, the flock of the faithful may always find shepherds after your own heart and be fed in the pastures of salvation. 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: 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 7 ~ 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, whose providence never fails in its design, keep from us, we humbly beseech you, all that might harm us and grant all that works for our good. 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: 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 8 ~ Ninth Week in Ordinary Time Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

Holy Gospel: John 19:31-37 Since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that

their legs be broken and they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out. An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may come to believe. For this happened so that the Scripture passage might be fulfilled: *Not a bone of it will be broken*. And again another passage says: *They will look upon him whom they have pierced*.

Meditation: True love does not count the cost, but gives everything for the beloved. Jesus withheld nothing, but gave everything he had for our sake. Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) says that "God loves each of us as if there were only one of us to love." In the cross of Christ we see the love of God broken and pierced for our sake. Jesus reigns triumphant at the right hand of the Father. He has risen in glory for our sake and he intercedes for us in heaven. He stands before the throne of heaven with his marks of victory – his pierced side, hands, and feet. Who can fathom the love of God? For all eternity we will gaze upon him who was crucified and who rose for our sake. The Lord Jesus calls us to lay down our lives in sacrificial love for one another. Only a broken and contrite heart can fathom the mercy of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Grant, we pray, almighty God, that we, who glory in the Heart of your beloved Son and recall the wonders of his love for us, may be made worthy to receive an overflowing measure of grace from that fount of heavenly gifts. 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: Do you know the heart of Jesus – a heart that was pierced for your sake and mine? Of all the Gospel accounts of Jesus' death, John mentions that the soldiers pierced his heart with a lance. This was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10: "when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him". The heart of Jesus was pierced for our sake. He willingly went to the cross and laid down his life as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. If we want to understand the depth and breadth of God's love for each of us, then look upon the heart that was pierced for you and for me. That is the reason Jesus went to the cross, to redeem us from slavery to sin and death.

About the Sacred Heart of Jesus: The devotion is made known to the world when our Lord had Saint Margaret ask that a Feast in honor of His Heart be offered Him by the Church on the Friday after the Solemnity of His Body and Blood (Corpus Christi), that such homage be paid to Himself by the King of France, and that the mission of propagating this devotion was to be entrusted to the Order of the Visitation Sisters and to the priests of the Society of Jesus. After Saint Margaret made this known to her spiritual director, the future Saint Claude de la Colombiere. He consecrated himself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and began to spread the devotion. From Paray-le-Monial, her convent, this devotion spread rapidly, under the care of the Jesuits, to the entire Church. Today, just outside of Paris, France, you can visit the Basilica built as an Act of National Reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which commemorates the Apparitions of the Sacred Heart to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. She is buried at Paray-le-Monial, which is between Lyons and Paris, France. Her feast day is October 16.

**For Prayers, Prayer Intentions, Mass Intentions at Paray-le-Monial,
please visit <http://www.sacrecoeur-paray.org/en/pray/>
*Click on the red "At the Heart" icon for English,
though some information is available only in French.***

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops;
prayers are from *The Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing, 2011;
information about saints, solemnities, feasts and memorials courtesy of the Catholic Culture web site.

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