

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)

“Learn to love humility, for it will cover all your sins. All sins are repulsive before God, but the most repulsive of all is pride of the heart. Do not consider yourself learned and wise; otherwise, all your efforts will be destroyed, and your boat will reach the harbor empty. If you have great authority, do not threaten anyone with death. Know that, according to nature, you too are susceptible to death, and that every soul sheds its body as its final garment.” ~SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA

**Monday, June 11 ~ Tenth Week in Ordinary Time
Saint Barnabas, Apostle**

Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Meditation: The beatitudes which Jesus offers us are a sign of contradiction to the world's understanding of happiness and joy. How can one possibly find happiness in poverty, hunger, mourning, and persecution? Poverty of spirit finds ample room and joy in possessing God as the greatest treasure possible. Hunger of the spirit seeks nourishment and strength in God's word and Spirit. Sorrow and mourning over wasted life and sin leads to joyful freedom from the burden of guilt and spiritual oppression. God reveals to the humble of heart the true source of abundant life and happiness. Jesus promises his disciples that the joys of heaven will more than compensate for the troubles and hardships they can expect in this world. Thomas Aquinas said: No one can live without joy. That is why a person deprived of spiritual joy goes after carnal pleasures. Do you know the happiness of hungering and thirsting for God alone?

Prayer: O God, who decreed that Saint Barnabas, a man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit, should be set apart to convert the nations, grant that the Gospel of Christ, which he strenuously preached, may be faithfully proclaimed by word and by deed. 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 is the good life? What is the ultimate end or purpose of life? Is it not happiness, which is none other than the complete good, the sum of all goods, leaving nothing more to be desired? Jesus addresses this question in his sermon on the mount. The word *beatitude* literally means "happiness" or "blessedness". What is the significance of Jesus' beatitudes, and why are they so central to his teaching? The beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness that God has placed in every heart. They teach us the final end to which God calls us, namely the coming of God's kingdom (Matt. 4:17), the vision of God (Matt. 5:8; 1 John 2;1), entering into the joy of the Lord (Matt. 25:21-23) and into his rest (Hebrews 4:7-11). Jesus' beatitudes also confront us with decisive choices concerning the life we pursue here on earth and the use we make of the goods he puts at our disposal. God alone satisfies. Knowing this, do you seek the highest good, the total good, which is above all else?

Tuesday, June 12 ~ Tenth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:13-16 Jesus said to his disciples: "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

Meditation: On many occasions Jesus used ordinary images, such as salt and light, to convey extraordinary truths. What does salt and light have to teach us about God and his reign on earth? Salt was a valuable commodity in the ancient world. People traded with it, like we trade with gold and stock. Salt also served a very useful purpose in hot climates before the invention of electricity and refrigeration. Salt not only gave food flavor, it also preserved meat from spoiling. Jesus used the image of salt to describe how his disciples are to live in the world. As salt purifies, preserves, and penetrates, so the disciple must be as salt in the world of human society to purify, preserve, and penetrate that society for the kingdom of God and of his righteousness and peace. Jesus also used the image of light and a lamp to further his illustration. Lamps in the ancient world served a vital function, much like they do today. They enable people to see and work in the dark and to avoid stumbling. The Jewish people also understood "light" as an expression of the inner beauty, truth, and goodness of God. "In his light we see light" (Psalm 36:9). "His word is a lamp that guides our steps" (Psalm 119:105). God's grace not only illumines the darkness in our lives, but it also fills us with spiritual light, joy, and peace. Jesus used the image of a lamp to describe how his disciples are to live in the light of his truth and love. Just as natural light illumines the darkness and enables one to see visually, so the light of Christ shines in the hearts of believers and enables us to see the heavenly reality of God's kingdom. In fact, our mission is to be light-bearers of Christ so that others may see the truth of the gospel and be freed from the blindness of sin and deception.

Prayer: O God, from whom all good things come, grant that we, who call on you in our need, may at your prompting discern what is right, and by your guidance do it. 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: Despite the steps we take to engage in activities out of the public eye in our attempt to keep things "secret," Jesus reminds us that nothing really ever remains hidden or secret. We can try to hide things from others, from ourselves, and foolishly from God – God who sees all and knows all. How tempting to shut our eyes from the consequences of our sinful ways and bad habits, even when we know what those consequences are. And how tempting to hide them from others and even from God. But, nonetheless, everything is known to God who sees all. There is great freedom and joy for those who live in God's light and who seek this truth. Those who listen to God and heed his voice will receive more from him. Do you know the joy and freedom of living in God's light?

Wednesday, June 13 ~ Tenth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Anthony of Padua, Priest and Doctor of the Church

Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:17-19 Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the Kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the Kingdom of heaven."

Meditation: Jesus taught reverence for God's law – reverence for God himself, for the Lord's Day, reverence or respect for parents, respect for life, for property, for another person's good name, respect for oneself and for one's neighbor lest wrong or hurtful desires master us. Reverence and respect for God's commandments teach us the way of love – love of God and love of neighbor. What is impossible to men is possible to God and those who have faith in God. God gives us the grace to love as he loves, to forgive as he forgives, to think as he thinks, and to act as he acts. The Lord loves righteousness and hates wickedness. As his followers we must love his commandments and hate every form of sin. Do you love the commands of the Lord?

Prayer: Almighty ever-living God, who gave Saint Anthony of Padua to your people as an outstanding preacher and an intercessor in their need, grant that, with his assistance, as we follow the teachings of

the Christian life, we may know your help in every trial. 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: Have you ever wondered why people generally tend to view the “law of God” negatively rather than positively? Jesus’ attitude towards the law of God can be summed up in the great prayer in Psalm 119: “Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.” For the people of Israel the “law” could refer to the Ten Commandments or to the five Books of Moses – the Pentateuch – which explain the commandments and ordinances of God for his people. The “law” also referred to the whole teaching or way of life which God gave to his people. The Jews in Jesus’ time also used it as a description of the oral or scribal law. Needless to say, the scribes added many more things to the law than God intended. That is why Jesus often condemned the scribal law. It placed burdens on people which God had not intended. Jesus, however, made it very clear that the essence of God’s law – his commandments and way of life, must be fulfilled. The law of God is truth and when we live according to that truth it produces the fruits of righteousness, holiness, peace, and joy.

Thursday, June 14 ~ Tenth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:20-26 Jesus said to his disciples: “I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment. But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, ‘Raqa,’ will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.”

Meditation: In these stress-filled and anxious times, are you ever driven by anger, rage, or revenge? The first person to hate his brother was Cain. God warned Cain: “Why are you angry?...Sin in couching at the door; it’s desire is for you, but you must master it” (Genesis 4:6-7). Sin doesn’t just happen to us; it first grows as a tiny seed in our heart. Unless it is uprooted, by God’s grace, it grows like a weed and chokes the vine and all its fruit. Jesus addressed the issue of keeping the commandments with his disciples. The scribes and Pharisees equated righteousness with satisfying the outward observance of the law. Jesus showed them how short they had come. Jesus points to the heart as the seat of desire and choice. Unless evil and forbidden desires are eradicated, the heart will be corrupted. Jesus points to forbidden anger with one’s brother. This is a selfish anger that broods and is long-lived, that nurses a grudge and keeps wrath warm, and that refuses to die. Harboring anger in the heart as well as anger in speech and action are equally forbidden by God. What, then, is the antidote to anger and rage? Mercy, kindness, and forbearance spring from a heart full of love and forgiveness. God has forgiven us and he calls us to extend mercy and forgiveness towards those who cause us grief and harm. In the cross of Jesus we see the supreme example of love and forgiveness and the power of goodness for overcoming evil. Only God’s love and grace can set our hearts and minds free from the tyranny of wounded pride and spiteful revenge. Do you harbor any anger towards another person? And are you quick to be reconciled when a rupture has been caused in your relationships? Ask God to set you free and to fill your heart and mind with his love and goodness. Paul the Apostle reminds us that “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). Through the grace and help of the Holy Spirit we can overcome malice with good, hatred with kindness, and injury with pardon.

Prayer: O God, from whom all good things come, grant that we, who call on you in our need, may at your prompting discern what is right, and by your guidance do it. 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: The following prayer of Saint Eusebius is well worth contemplation: “May I be no man’s enemy, and may I be the friend of that which is eternal and abides. May I never quarrel with those nearest me: and if I do, may I be reconciled quickly. May I love, seek, and attain only that which is good. May I wish for all men’s happiness and envy none. May I never rejoice in the ill-fortune of one who has wronged me. When I have done or said what is wrong, may I never wait for the rebuke of others, but always rebuke myself until I make amends. May I win no victory that harms either me or my opponent. May I reconcile friends who are angry with one another. May I never fail a friend who is in danger. When visiting those in grief may I be able by gentle and healing words to soften their pain. May I respect myself. May I always keep tame that which rages within me. May I accustom myself to be gentle, and never be

angry with people because of circumstances. May I never discuss who is wicked and what wicked things he has done, but know good men and follow in their footsteps.”

Friday, June 16 ~ Tenth Week in Ordinary Time

Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:27-32 Jesus said to his disciples: “You have heard that it was said, *You shall not commit adultery*. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna. “It was also said, *Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce*. But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

Meditation: Jesus warns us of the terrible responsibility that we must set no stumbling block in the way of another, that is, not give offense or bad example that might lead another to sin. The young in faith are especially vulnerable to the bad example of those who should be passing on the faith. Jesus teaches that righteousness involves responding to every situation in life in a way that fulfills God's law, not just externally but internally as well. Jesus says that evil desires spring from the heart. That is why the sin of adultery must first be dealt with in the heart, the place not only of the emotions, but the mind, will, thought, and intentions as well. God's intention and ideal from the beginning was for man and woman to be indissolubly united in marriage as “one flesh” (see Genesis 2:23-24). That ideal is found in the unbreakable union of Adam and Eve. They were created for each other and for no one else. They are the pattern and symbol for all who were to come. Moses permitted divorce as a concession in view of a lost ideal (see Mark 10:2-9). Jesus sets the high ideal of the married state before those who are willing to accept his commands. Jesus gives the grace and power of his Holy Spirit to those who seek to follow his way of holiness in their state of life – whether married or single. If we want to live righteously as God desires for us, then we must know and understand the intention of God's commands for us, and decide in our heart to obey the Lord. Through the gift and working of the Holy Spirit, the Lord writes his law on our hearts and gives us his power to live his way of righteousness and holiness. Do you trust in God's love and allow his Holy Spirit to fill you with a thirst for holiness and righteousness in every area of your life?

Prayer: O God, from whom all good things come, grant that we, who call on you in our need, may at your prompting discern what is right, and by your guidance do it. 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 mean when he says “pluck out your eye” or “cut off your hand and throw it away” if it leads you to sin? Is he exaggerating here? Jesus used forceful language to urge his disciples to choose for life – an enduring life of joy and happiness with God – rather than for death – an unending death and total separation from a community of love, peace, joy and friendship with God. Jesus set before his disciples the one goal in life that is worth any sacrifice and that goal is the conformity of our will with God and what he desires for our well-being and happiness with him. Just as a doctor might remove some part of the body, such as a diseased limb, in order to preserve the life of the whole body, so we must be ready to part with anything that causes us to sin and which inevitably leads to spiritual death.

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