

LENT *and*
EASTER
WISDOM
— *from* —
SAINT FRANCIS
AND
SAINT CLARE
OF ASSISI

Daily Scripture and Prayers
Together With Saint Francis and
Saint Clare of Assisi's Own Words

Compiled by John V. Kruse, PhD



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Reflecting God's Mercy

*I*wish to know in this way if you love the Lord and me, His servant and yours: that there is not any brother in the world who has sinned—however much he could have sinned—who, after he has looked into your eyes, would ever depart without your mercy, if he is looking for mercy. And if he were not looking for mercy, you would ask him if he wants mercy. And if he would sin a thousand times before your eyes, love him more than me so that you may draw him to the Lord; and always be merciful with brothers such as these...

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI,
"A LETTER TO A MINISTER," 97–98

MERCY BEYOND JUSTICE

Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

LUKE 15:11–14, 20–24

PRAYER

Merciful Lord, I have failed you in many aspects of my life. Yet, you do not require retribution from me. Rather, you reach out to me with unconditional love, and your mercy goes far beyond what human justice might require. Keep me mindful of your mercy toward me so that I might better show mercy toward others.

LENTEN ACTION

When someone wrongs you, rather than demanding that he or she makes up for the offense, demonstrate mercy by letting that person “off of the hook.”



Finding Christ Amidst the Poor, Suffering, and Marginalized

Sir 35:4

The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and *I showed mercy* to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, “THE TESTAMENT,” 124

TO MINISTER TO CHRIST'S PEOPLE IS TO MINISTER TO CHRIST

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

MATTHEW 25:34–40

PRAYER

Christ, you humbled yourself by assuming our humanity. You did not become a powerful earthly king, but rather associated with the poor, sick, and outcasts of your day. During this Lenten season, remind me that in my own world, you are not to be found in the thrones of power but amidst the suffering of the lowly. Enlighten and strengthen me as I seek to reach out to those who are forgotten and excluded in our society. Lead me to recognize that in serving them, I am in fact serving you.

LENTEN ACTION

Early in his life, Francis was repulsed by lepers, but he eventually came to see Christ in their faces. From whom do you turn away in your own life? Take a step to reach out to include this person or group of people.



Family

We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brothers, moreover, when we do *the will of His Father Who* is in heaven; mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience; and give Him birth through a holy activity, which must shine before others by example.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, “LATER ADMONITION AND EXHORTATION
TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE,” 49

THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN GOD'S FAMILY

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

EPHESIANS 3:14–21

PRAYER

Christ, I thank you for the gift of my physical family, yet I realize that my relationship with you is deeper than any other relationship that I can have. Help me to deepen that relationship by filling me with your Spirit. Strengthen me to do your Father's will. Purify my heart and be with me as I strive to make you present in the world through my loving actions. I ask you, Lord, to bless members of my earthly family, those with whom I am close as well as those with whom I may be estranged.

LENTEN ACTION

Francis states that one way we make Christ present in the world is through acting on a pure conscience. Examine your conscience as regards your relationships with family members. Work at improving or healing a familial relationship.



Becoming Vulnerable in Order to Do God's Work

Wherever they may be, let all my brothers remember that they have given themselves and abandoned their bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ. For love of Him, they must make themselves vulnerable to their enemies, both visible and invisible, because the Lord says: *Whoever loses his life because of me will save it in eternal life. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they persecute you in one town, flee to another. Blessed are you when people hate you, speak evil of you, persecute, expel, and abuse you, denounce your name as evil and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad on that day because your reward is great in heaven.*

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *THE EARLIER RULE* (XVI: THOSE GOING
AMONG THE SARACENS AND OTHER NONBELIEVERS), 74–75

TAKING THE RISK OF EXTENDING ONESELF FOR OTHERS

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

LUKE 10:25–37

PRAYER

Lord, as you found out in your own life, when I try to do good for others, I can often end up getting wounded myself. Yet, you continue to call me to trust in you and to extend myself for others. May the knowledge that comes from knowing that I am striving to do your will, even when I feel wounded by opening myself to others, give me the strength and courage to continue to serve you.

LENTEN ACTION

As the saying goes, no good deed goes unpunished. In spite of the hesitancy that this sentiment may inspire, trust in God. Extend yourself for the good of another today, even if your good deed may be turned against you and result in you feeling wounded.

