

## Scripture Readings for Silent Meditation

1. “Christ Jesus, though he was God ... emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:6-7).

*Why did Jesus institute the Eucharist? For the same reasons he became man. The first main reason is presence. The “divine condescension” (self-emptying) wanted to dwell with us (born in the likeness of men) as one of us, to be seen and touched and heard and met in space and time. God prepared this in the Old Testament, by choosing a people and making himself known, especially in the Temple, the “dwelling place of his glory.” He foretells his actual arrival through the prophets (e.g. “the Virgin will conceive and bear a son, Emmanuel, God-with-us”). The divine condescension of the incarnation is taken one step further in the Eucharist. By it, he wants to remain with us throughout history and time, present wherever there is a priest and a tabernacle. He veils his majesty so that we are not afraid to come to him as we wish. Like a true friend, he stays near in supreme charity, to lift up our hope with his familiar presence (St. Thomas Aquinas).*

2. “If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love” (Jn 15:10).

*As man, Jesus taught us perfect virtue in word and action, especially in his passion, death and resurrection (Paschal Mystery). As Eucharist, Jesus is a model of virtue, especially of agape/charity, humility and obedience. The Eucharist is agape, the gift of self for the beloved. He “enacts” this charity every day and place there is a Catholic priest and a church, to give himself as Bridegroom of our souls. Charity seeks not its own: the Eucharist is entirely for our benefit. It is the greatest treasure of the universe given freely. Charity is patient, discreet, reaches down to the level of the beloved so as not to humiliate or intimidate. The Eucharist does not overawe us like Tabor but humbly seeks our loving response. He bears all things, allowing himself to be received by those who have lost faith, are in a state of mortal sin, are indifferent, are sacrilegious. The Blessed Sacrament is the perfect model of humility, self-abnegation and poverty. It is even more humble than the stable of Bethlehem: he even foregoes the beauty of his sacred humanity. The Eucharist is also the most perfect model of obedience: obedient to the Father, obedient to his priests absolutely and unconditionally, coming when they validly consecrate, remaining present until the sacred species of bread and wine are digested or corrupted. He comes regardless of the simplicity or solemnity of the ceremony and of the state of grace of priest or communicant. He even endures wilful sacrilege.*

## THURSDAY AGAPE

EVENING PRAYER (VESPERS)

THURSDAY, 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2021

*SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA, Virgin & Doctor*

### Introduction (All stand)

*Priest:* O God, come to our aid.

*People:* O Lord, make haste to help us.

*Priest:* Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

*People:* as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia.

### Hymn

1. *Jesu, the virgins’ Crown, do Thou  
Accept us as in prayer we bow,  
Born of that virgin whom alone  
The mother and the maid we own.*

2. *Amongst the lilies Thou dost feed,  
And thither choirs of virgins lead,  
Adorning all Thy chosen brides  
With glorious gifts Thy love provides.*

3. *And whither, Lord, Thy footsteps wend,  
The virgins still with praise attend;*

*For Thee they pour their sweetest song,  
And after Thee rejoicing throng.*

4. *O gracious Lord, we Thee implore  
Thy grace on every sense to pour;  
From all pollution keep us free,  
And make us pure in heart for Thee.*

5. *All praise to God the Father be,  
All praise, Eternal Son, to Thee,  
Whom with the Spirit we adore  
For ever and for evermore.*

### Psalms and Canticle (All sit)

#### Psalm 121 (122) Jerusalem, the holy city

“You have come to Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb 12:22).

*Priest: I will keep myself chaste for you. I will meet you, the bridegroom, carrying a brightly shining lamp, alleluia.*

*Women:* I rejoiced when I heard them say:  
‘Let us go to God’s house.’  
And now our feet are standing  
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

*Men:* Jerusalem is built as a city  
strongly compact.  
It is there that the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the Lord.

For Israel’s law it is,  
there to praise the Lord’s name.  
There were set the thrones of judgement  
of the house of David.

For the peace of Jerusalem pray:  
‘Peace be to your homes!  
May peace reign in your walls,  
in your palaces, peace!’

For love of my brethren and friends  
I say: ‘Peace upon you!’  
For love of the house of the Lord  
I will ask for your good.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.  
Amen.

*All: I will keep myself chaste for you. I will meet you, the bridegroom, carrying a brightly shining lamp, alleluia.*

Christ Jesus, the holy virgins went to meet you with lamps burning bright; keep alive the flame of fidelity in the hearts of religious women.  
– *Jesus, king of virgins, hear us.*

Lord, you have always preserved your Church in purity and soundness of faith; grant to all Christians a faith that is true and complete.  
– *Jesus, king of virgins, hear us.*

You bring joy to the lives of your faithful as they celebrate the feast of your holy virgin Catherine; may they also rejoice in her constant intercession.  
– *Jesus, king of virgins, hear us.*

You have welcomed your holy virgins to the wedding feast of heaven; invite all the dead to the feast of eternal life.  
– *Jesus, king of virgins, hear us.*

Our Father

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*Priest:* Almighty God, you made Saint Catherine of Siena a contemplative lover of the Lord’s sufferings and an ardent servant of your church. Grant through her prayer that your people may be united to Christ in his mystery, and rejoice for ever in the revelation of his glory. 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. *All: Amen.*

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*Priest:* The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. *All: Amen.*

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*Men:* The Almighty works mar-vels for me.  
Ho-ly his name!  
His mercy is from age to age,  
on those who fear him.

He puts forth his arm in strength  
and scatters the proud-hearted.  
He casts the mighty from their thrones  
and rai-ses the lowly.

He fills the starving with good things,  
sends the rich a-way empty.

He protects Isra-el, his servant,  
Remembe-ring his mercy,  
the mercy promised to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his sons for ever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Ho-ly Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and e-ver shall be, world without end.  
Amen.

*All: At all times and in all places, Catherine sought God. She found him and was united to him in love, alleluia.*

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### **Prayers and intercessions**

*Priest:* Christ the Lord praised those who follow the way of virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let us proclaim his love and pray:

–*All: Jesus, king of virgins, hear us.*

Christ our Lord, you presented the Church to yourself, as a chaste virgin to her only husband; make her pure, holy and faultless.

–*Jesus, king of virgins, hear us.*

### **Psalm 126 (127) Without the Lord, we labour in vain**

*“You are God’s building” (1 Cor 3:9).*

*Priest: Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God, alleluia.*

*Men:* If the Lord does not build the house,  
in vain do its builders labour;  
if the Lord does not watch over the city,  
in vain does the watchman keep vigil.

*Women:* In vain is your earlier rising,  
your going later to rest,  
you who toil for the bread you eat,  
when he pours gifts on his beloved while they slumber.

Truly sons are a gift from the Lord,  
a blessing, the fruit of the womb.  
Indeed the sons of youth  
are like arrows in the hand of a warrior.

O the happiness of the man  
who has filled his quiver with these arrows!  
He will have no cause for shame  
when he disputes with his foes in the gateways.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.  
Amen.

*All: Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God, alleluia.*

### **Canticle**

### **Ephesians 1**

### **God the Saviour**

*Priest: My firm hope will not be moved; it is based on Christ like a house on a rock, alleluia.*

*Men:* Blessed be the God and Father  
of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who has blessed us in Christ  
with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

*Women:* He chose us in him  
before the foundation of the world,  
that we should be holy  
and blameless before him.

He destined us in love  
to be his sons through Jesus Christ,  
according to the purpose of his will,  
to the praise of his glorious grace  
which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

In him we have redemption through his blood,  
the forgiveness of our trespasses,  
according to the riches of his grace  
which he lavished upon us.

He has made known to us  
in all wisdom and insight  
the mystery of his will,  
according to his purpose  
which he set forth in Christ.

His purpose he set forth in Christ  
as a plan for the fullness of time,  
to unite all things in him,  
things in heaven and things on earth.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.  
Amen.

*All: My firm hope will not be moved; it is based on Christ like a house on a rock, alleluia.*

### **Short Reading**

### **1 Corinthians 7:32,34**

An unmarried man can devote himself to the Lord's affairs, all he need worry about is pleasing the Lord. In the same way an unmarried woman, like a young girl, can devote herself to the Lord's affairs; all she need worry about is being holy in body and spirit.

### **Short Responsory**

*Priest:* The virgins come before the king. They sing for joy. Alleluia, alleluia.

*All: The virgins come before the king. They sing for joy. Alleluia, alleluia.*

They are led into the temple of the king.

– *The virgins come before the king. They sing for joy. Alleluia, alleluia.*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

– *The virgins come before the king. They sing for joy. Alleluia, alleluia.*

### **Canticle** (*All stand*)

### **Magnificat**

#### **My soul rejoices in the Lord**

*Priest: At all times and in all places, Catherine sought God. She found him and was united to him in love, alleluia.*

*Women:* My soul glori-fies the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.  
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;  
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.