

Monday

Moderation in the disciplines

But our flesh is not bronze, nor is our strength that of stone, rather, we are frail and inclined to every bodily weakness! I beg you, therefore, dearly beloved, to refrain wisely and prudently from an indiscreet and impossible austerity in the fasting that you have undertaken. And I beg you in the Lord to praise the Lord by your very life, to offer the Lord your reasonable service and your sacrifice always seasoned with salt.

— St. Clare of Assisi, “The Third Letter to Agnes of Prague”

Scripture

Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, ‘Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?’ Jesus said to them, ‘The wedding-guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. (Mark 2.18-20)

Prayer

Lord, I am often tempted to push myself too far. Help me to grow in appreciation of the goodness of my body and to show it the respect that it deserves. When I tend to overextend myself or push myself too hard, strengthen the virtue of moderation within me so that I may have a healthy attitude about acts of self-denial and service toward others.

Tuesday

Sacred spaces

And the Lord gave me such faith in churches that I would pray with simplicity in this way and say: “We adore You, Lord Jesus Christ, in all Your churches throughout the whole world and we bless You because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.”

—St. Francis of Assisi, “The Testament”

Scripture

‘Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.’ (Matthew 18.19-20)

Prayer

Lord, while Francis recognized your presence throughout creation, he had a great respect for the sacred space of churches, and he placed the highest value on his encounter with you in Holy Communion. May I too come to a deeper respect for the sacred space of your house, where you are present not only in the bread and cup, but also in the body of believers gathered in your name.

Wednesday

The mirror of Christ

Gaze upon that mirror each day,...
and continually study your face in it,
that you may adorn yourself completely,
within and without,
covered and arrayed in needlework
and similarly adorned
with the flowers and garments of all the virtues... Indeed,
in that mirror,
blessed poverty,
holy humility,
and inexpressible charity shine forth
as, with the grace of God,
you will be able to contemplate them throughout
the entire mirror.

— St. Clare of Assisi, “The Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague”

Scripture

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3.18)

Prayer

Lord, as I gaze at your face, I see myself as you call me to be. May my heart, mind, and will be stirred to conversion by this encounter. While you serve as a mirror of me, I also desire to become a mirror that reflects your presence to the world. Assist me as I strive to become more like you by living in simplicity, humility, and love for others.

Thursday

Taking up our cross

In what, then, can you boast? Even if you were so skillful and wise that you possessed all knowledge, knew how to interpret every kind of language, and to scrutinize heavenly matters with skill: you could not boast in these things. For, even though someone may have received from the Lord a special knowledge of the highest wisdom, one demon knew about heavenly matters and now knows more about those of earth than all human beings. In the same way, even if you were more handsome and richer than everyone else, and even if you worked miracles so that you put demons to flight: all these things are contrary to you; nothing belongs to you; you can boast in none of these things. But we can boast in our weaknesses and in carrying each day the holy cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

— St. Francis of Assisi, *The Admonitions*

Scripture

Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12.7-10)

Prayer

Lord, you call me to follow you by taking up my own cross in life. Grant me strength and courage to more willingly and lovingly embrace the trials, struggles, and persecutions of my own life so that your glory might shine through me.

Friday

Bear difficulty with patience

Let them direct their attention to what they should desire above all else: to have the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity, to pray always to Him with a pure heart, and to have humility, patience in difficulty and infirmity, and to love those who persecute, blame, and accuse us, for the Lord says: *Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. But whoever perseveres to the end will be saved.*

— St. Clare of Assisi, *The Form of Life of Saint Clare*

Scripture

For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. (Colossians 1.9-12)

Prayer

Lord, I bear many burdens in life, some of which are imposed upon me by others. There is also much that concerns me: bills, work, family, relationships, and simply how I am going to get through the day. You knew very well the tribulations of human existence. Yet you patiently accepted the shortcomings of others and the trials of life, even to the point of death. When I experience trials and worries, I often become impatient and want instant solutions to my problems. Give me strength and wisdom to be patient as I face the burdens and concerns of this life. In doing so, may I learn the wisdom that comes in trusting in you and waiting on your assistance.

Saturday

The value of silence

Let all the brothers [and sisters] be careful not to slander or engage in disputes; let them strive, instead, to keep silence whenever God gives them the grace.

—St. Francis of Assisi, *The Earlier Rule*

Scripture

He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. (1 Kings 19.11-12)

*For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.
(Psalm 62.5-7)*

Prayer

Lord, sometimes I avoid silence out of fear of what I might hear. Help me to overcome this fear and to quiet the many noises that surround me so that I can better hear your voice in my life.