

**Daily Meditations on the Love of God
from Father Laurence Kriegshauser, O.S.B.**

A Scripture text is given for each day of the year as an opportunity for you to hear the Lord speaking to your heart through that particular text on that particular day. Following the text is a short meditation that you can use to supplement or complement your own experience of the divine word.

February 1

If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. (Mark 8:34-35)

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Jesus tells us what we all want to hear, namely how to save our life. By surrendering to his loving will, we may suffer the loss of temporary comforts (that is, bear the cross), only to find our true life in him. He alone can bring lasting happiness.

February 2

Didn't you realize that you were God's temple and that the Spirit of God was living among you? If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy him, because the temple of God is sacred; and you are that temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

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God dwells in us through his Spirit, who makes us like his Son. The Christian is called to dwell in the Trinity, who in turn makes his home in us. Prayer is simply enjoying this mutual indwelling, surrendering ourselves to its power.

February 3

Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life and death, the present and the future are all your servants; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God. (1 Corinthians 3:22-23)

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Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ who live by his Spirit. The Eucharist nourishes the Body of Christ that is the Church until we become one as the Father and Son are one (John 17:22). Then Christ will hand over the kingdom to his Father, so that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:24, 28)

February 4

Neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

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This magnificent assurance of the unbreakable bond of love uniting God to his people through Christ is the anchor for our soul, the rock foundation of our daily lives. The only

thing that could block our receiving of this love is our free rejection of it. We can pray earnestly to God never to allow us to do that.

February 5

Love your enemies, do good to those who treat you badly. To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too; to the man who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. (Luke 6:27-29)

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Robbers came to a desert father and stole the few items in his cell. Noticing one item still left, he ran after the thieves crying, "Hey, you forgot this." We probably won't reach that state of perfection, but we can, indeed must, learn to love those who hurt us, who don't appreciate us, who disagree with us. It is the only way to love one another as Christ loved us. It may also be the way to turn enemies into friends. People need to know that they are loved as they are.

February 6

Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. (Luke 6:36)

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This is Saint Luke's version of Saint Matthew's "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." The perfection we are called to is compassion for others, modeled on the Father's compassion in sending his Son to die for sinners. Only our close reliance on the power of Jesus in us can bring us to that lofty perfection.

February 7

The precepts of the Lord are right, they gladden the heart. (Psalm 19:9)

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The New Testament reduces all the precepts of the Lord to one: You must love your neighbor as yourself (Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). If to love one's neighbor is to be one with God (1 John 4:12, 16), how can that precept do anything but bring joy to the heart.

February 8

"Everything is possible for anyone who has faith." Immediately the father of the boy cried out, "I do have faith. Help the little faith I have!" (Mark 9:23-24)

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Faith can move mountains and uproot trees because it is the acceptance of God's gift of himself. But like the father of the epileptic boy we need to cry out for an increase of this faith, which always remains a gift. Jesus heard and answered the heartfelt cry of the father. May he increase our faith.

February 9

Whatever happens to you, accept it, and in the uncertainties of your humble state, be patient, since gold is tested in the fire, and chosen men in the furnace of humiliation. (Sirach 2:4-5)

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People speak today of the “resilience” of the human person. We have untried capacities that can surprise us when circumstances draw them out. According to Leon Bloy, “Man has places in his heart that do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering so that they may have existence.” Suffering purifies us for union with God.

February 10

The Lord is compassionate and merciful; he forgives sins, and saves in days of distress. (Sirach 2:11)

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The first two attributes are part of God’s self-revelation to Moses in Exodus 34:6, a revelation given after the sin of the golden calf. Sins have only to be confessed to be forgiven. The five attributes of God in Exodus 34:6 need to be memorized since they define the essence of Israel’s and the Church’s God, the mainspring of all his actions, and are continually repeated in the Bible.

February 11

If you trust in the Lord and do good, then you will live in the land and be secure. If you find your delight in the Lord, he will grant your heart’s desire. (Psalm 37:3-4)

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Psalm 37 says in many ways that those who rely on God for the strength to perform good works will flourish. How can we not delight in the will of the one who loves us? He responds to our delight by giving us what we need.

February 12

God opposes the proud but he gives generously to the humble. (James 4:6)

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Pride is that self-glorification that stands in the way of our submitting to dependence on God. It blocks out the love the Father wishes to lavish on us. He can demolish our pride if we ask him to.

February 13

Entrust your cares to the Lord and he will support you. (Psalm 55:23)

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It is hard to relinquish tight control of our lives, but submitting our neediness to the Father is paradoxically the source of our strength. We rely on infinite strength rather than on our own limited power.

February 14

Happy indeed is the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked, nor lingers in the way of sinners nor sits in the company of scorners, but whose delight is the law of the Lord and who ponders his law day and night. He is like a tree that is planted beside the flowing waters that yields its fruit in due season and whose leaves shall never fade; and all that he does shall prosper. (Psalm 1:1-3)

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Scripture likens the just man to one whose roots are in God. Planted by the waters of the Holy Spirit and drawing life from those waters, the human person in Christ brings forth much fruit. The two requirements given by our psalm are delight in the law (self-revelation) of God and constant remembering of it.

February 15

I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. (Mark 10;15)

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The most autonomous individual may achieve great things but cannot achieve eternal life, which is given as a free gift to those who entrust themselves to life's giver. Even Citizen Kane had to recognize at the end of his life his need for love.

February 16

I will betroth you to myself for ever, betroth you with righteousness and justice, with love and compassion; I will betroth you to myself with faithfulness, and you will come to know the Lord. (Hosea 2:21-22)

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The prophet Hosea gives us the first sure place in the Bible where the covenant between God and his people is expressed in spousal terms. The theme is richly developed in later prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and comes to full expression in the New Testament. Jesus is the Bridegroom of his people (Mark 2:19; John 3:28-30; Eph 5:25-32), espousing the Church to himself in unconditional love. Male and female, all are called to this intimate and life-giving union.

February 17

A man's words flow out of what fills his heart. (Luke 6:45)

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The main thrust of Jesus's Sermons on the Mount (Saint Matthew) and on the Plain (Saint Luke) is the transformation of the human heart. Only purity of heart (Matthew 5:8) can make a man's speech pure, and purity of heart can only be accomplished by divine action. The Pharisees gave God external worship but their hearts were far from him (Mark 7:6-7). Let us ask God to cleanse our heart so that our words spring from genuine love.

February 18

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us a new birth as his sons, by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, so that we have a sure hope and the promise of an inheritance that can never be spoilt or soiled and never fade away, because it is being kept for you in the heavens. (1 Peter 1:3-4)

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The passage is an example of the *kerygma*, the primitive proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus that is the heart of our faith. It further roots this saving act of God in the divine mercy, God's kindly love for sinners. Finally it shows the result of the *kerygma*: our rebirth to eternal life as God's sons. We can never meditate enough on the *kerygma*, which can also be called the paschal mystery, the rising of Jesus from the dead, Easter.

February 19

If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength, for each separate part to work according to its function. So the body grows until it has built itself up, in love. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

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The first clause is often translated, "If we speak the truth in love," but here it refers more broadly to living according to the truth, the truth that is Christ. The verb might even be translated "truthing." The Christian living in Christ loves like Christ, loves with Christ. Each member of the Body has distinct gifts which contribute to the whole Body's growth, and each member can draw on the gifts of fellow members. Only the grace of Christ poured out on his Church can bring the differing, and sometimes contradictory, gifts of the members into dynamic harmony.

February 20

You have been obedient to the truth and purified your souls until you can love like brothers, in sincerity; let your love for each other be real and from the heart—your new birth was not from any mortal seed but from the everlasting word of the living and eternal God. (1 Peter 1:22-23)

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It is the word of God, lovingly received, that cleanses the heart and makes love possible. That is why it is so important for Christians to take time each day to listen to that word. The word begets life.

February 21

Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:43-45)

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The sin of man consisted in saying to God, "I will not serve" (Jeremiah 2:20). In a distortion of his true condition as a creature of God, man sought to be his own god (Genesis 3:5-6). Jesus repaired the damage by submitting to God in his humanity and asks us to conform ourselves to him (Luke 22:27). In serving the one who loves us, and serving him in the poor, we find our true freedom.

February 22

The word of the Lord is faithful, and all his works to be trusted. The Lord loves justice and right and fills the earth with his love. (Psalm 33:4-5)

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God's love (Hebrew *hesed*) is his fundamental attribute, the one that identifies his essence. Our task is to open ourselves to this love which flows into us even through created things.

February 23

He is the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him; set yourselves close to him so that you too, the holy priesthood that offers the spiritual sacrifices which Jesus Christ has made acceptable to God, may be living stones making a spiritual house. (1 Peter 2:4-5)

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As stones of a building we are fitted together in unity, built on the foundation of the rock that is Christ. But these stones are living because they support each other and offer worship to the Father in Christ. Saint Peter has given us an "imaginary" by which we can understand our identity as Church.

February 24

Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me. (Mark 10:47)

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The blind man's exact words are *lesou, eleison me*. The plea for mercy pervades the Mass. God needs only the acknowledgement of our weakness to pour forth his kindness and healing on us. For eastern monks the constant cry was the Jesus prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me."

February 25

I can do all things with the help of the One who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:13)

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Literally, God is the one who "dynamizes" me, giving me energy for good works through his Spirit dwelling in me.

February 26

Unload all your worries on to the Lord, since he is looking after you. (1 Peter 5:7)

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Beset by concerns for the universal Church, Saint John XXIII went to bed every night with the words, "It's your Church, Lord; I'm going to sleep."

February 27

Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest.
(Matthew 11:28)

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We "come to" Jesus by listening to his love and allowing him to be the "rest" which our souls seek.

February 28

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:29)

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When we submit to the one who loves us, we allow him to shape us in his likeness and experience the rest of the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3; Hebrews 4:8-11).

February 29

My yoke is easy and my burden light.

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The yoke of Jesus's commands is easy because he bears it with us. It is by relying on his power that we can fulfill these commands. The "burden" is a "present light affliction" preparing us for a weight of eternal glory (2 Corinthians 4:17). Keeping their eyes on the goal the martyrs suffered death cheerfully.