

# This week meditations on liturgical texts from Skynia Magazine

# October 10-16 The Gregorian calendar

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## **Stages of meditation**

Please find below some schematic prompts for each stage of the meditation on the Word of God. Read more.

## 1. Reading

- Read the text
- O What does it tell by itself?
- Clear up the context
- Look up the comments
- Find the key-phrase

#### 2. Meditation

- O What is my here and now?
- O What does the Word tell me?
- Use your imagination
- "Digest" the text
- The Word and my life

## 3. Prayer

- Owner will I say in response?
- Recognition and request
- Gratitude and glorifying
- Prayer in the Word
- My participation in the Divine Liturgy

## 4. Contemplation

- A call to conversion
- Now Lam silent
- Staying in the presence of God
- Now He is guiding me

# **Biblical readings and meditations**

October 10

Sunday 20

**Galatians 1: 11-19** 

Luke 7: 11-16

- Reading
- Meditation
- Prayer
- Contemplation

**Galatians 1: 11-19** 

Brethren, for I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother.

#### Luke 7: 11-16

Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God has looked favorably on his people!"

### Meditation

On the way to Nain, Jesus met the dead son of a poor widow. Today, you can also often see children being buried. No one can get used to such a drama. Every death of a child, for any reason, shakes everyone's conscience. Youth means the fullness of life, the ability to dream, creative imagination, passion to build – all these are the vocations that must be fulfilled. During the funeral of a child or a young person one feels the heaviness that is not present at other funerals. Everyone present is touched by the mourning that is so close to despair. In such moments it is hard to say anything.

Two crowds meet in Nain. One crowd follows Jesus, Who seeks human suffering to make it His own. To transmit not only the suffering, but everything that constitutes a human being, - in order to carry it to the heart and mind of the Father. And there is a crowd that follows the bier. This crowd seems to be the sum of all the misfortunes that befell this one family: the widow, the mother's only son, and death. Here pain became an abyss that absorbed every word of love. Jesus, as always, felt that witnessing such a heavy loss, people felt as if the whole world and even Heaven had turned against them. Therefore, it was necessary to strongly confirm the closeness of the Father, Who is present among people, even when it seems that everyone is against you. And Jesus does the unheard. With the simplicity of God's power He performs works that belong to God. He stops the funeral procession; orders the young man to rise and gives him to his mother. In this way human hope returns to its place and everyone from the depths of this weeping misery can see that Heaven is not against you, it is open. And not just once, but always. After all, a great prophet has risen among us! and God has looked favorably on his people!

Today God still walks our streets. In deep personal grief, in the terrible tragedies of our history, we do not know the *reasons* for Love, but we are sure that nothing will drive this Love away. The sky is always open. And we believe that God the Father cares for us. Especially when, trusting in His Love, we have to *contra spem spero* (to hope being hopeless) and continue to believe.

## Monday

Philippians 4: 10-23

Luke 7: 36-50

- Reading
- Meditation
- Prayer
- Contemplation

## Philippians 4: 10-23

Brethren, I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress.

You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone. For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account. I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to

his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The friends who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of the emperor's household.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

#### Luke 7: 36-50

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner." Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak." "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears

and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

#### Meditation

In the previous chapter of the Gospel of Luke Jesus teaches: for the measure you give will be the measure you get back (Luke 6:38). And now we see how this truth is revealed in real life. One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him and received everything he had expected: Jesus went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. He did not expect any additional signs of attention, such as a kiss, anointing the head with oil or something else. We also know that Jesus could give this man much more than just a good company during the meal time, but He was not in a hurry with the gifts.

What did the woman expected from Jesus? Probably, at that moment she would not dare to ask for something. She was not afraid to follow Jesus into the house of the Pharisee. Perhaps her internal struggle lasted long enough and she was so exhausted that the opinion of other people did not matter to her. The woman knew where she was going, so she took the ointment with her to show

Jesus her sincerity and respect. Who knows, maybe it was a gratitude for a small ray of forgiveness, which her soul received the day before and which now was shining fully in public. How good it is that our inner experiences remain a mystery to others! It will also remain a secret for us what her compatriots knew about her. All we know is that God accepted her, forgave her, and gave her peace. This peace is more valuable than any wealth of the world, it is more important than human recognition. It can only be given by God and is given only to those who want to receive it.

Peace in the heart is a foretaste of the paradise, a feeling of God's special attention to our lives. He gives courage to grow in faith and ignore human condemnation. It is the restoration of harmony broken by sin. This is the most we can ask of God. What are we ready to do to make this peace settle in our hearts?

Jesus! When you come to me, remind me what I really have to ask from you. Give courage to accept your forgiveness and peace despite the condemnation of others. Teach me to love a lot and ask a lot! Thank you for everything you give!

## Tuesday

**Colossians 1: 1-2,7-11** 

Luke 8: 1-3

- Reading
- Meditation
- Prayer
- **Contemplation**

## Colossians 1: 1-2,7-11

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

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.

#### Luke 8: 1-3

Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

#### Meditation

It is so easy to let words and familiar phrases fly past your ears. It is so easy to be present at the Liturgy, listen to or read this passage, and hear nothing. What exactly did Paul the apostle say to the Colossians, and what is he saying today to us, to me?

He is praying for two gifts, two things. To lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him; and that they may be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power. Is here anything to think of? It is obvious that we need to live a life worthy of the Lord which He will like, and seek strength in His power. What a banality! But in fact, not.

The apostle suggests us one more goal. He is not praying in order to make some abstract karma of the Colossians better or to make them better and fluffier. Paul sets a goal for them, assigns a task for which they must receive these two gifts, which their teacher asks for them from the Lord. What are these goals? It turns out that the desire to live a life that pleases God is not an end in itself and not

the top of our dreams and desires. Similarly, to be made strong with the strength that comes from the Lord is only a means, an intermediate stage, not the end of the path.

Paul emphasizes that a dignified life, compatible with the will of God, must bear fruit, otherwise this life cannot please God: as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. If I think that God only wants me to be polite, greet everyone and not to quarrel with others then I am very wrong. Yes, when I was 6-7 years old that might have been enough. But I have to grow and develop. I must bear fruit in every good work. That means I cannot sit in a well-swept courtyard all my life and smile politely at passers-by. I have to make a commitment, roll up my sleeves, get to work, sprinkle the fruit of my hard work with sweat and possibly blood.

This means that I will be wrong, that I will not always be polite, that I will do many things wrong before my work begins to bear fruit *in all good work*. But only in this way I will *grow in the knowledge of God*.

And the goal of my work, my sweat, mistakes and searches which are *made strong with the strength that comes from the Lord* is not to increase wealth, make my reputation better, receive the satisfaction of how good I am or of the misconception of myself as a perfect person and Christian. The goal is to *be prepared to endure everything with patience and joyfully*.

## Wednesday

**Colossians 1: 18-23** 

Luke 8: 22-25

- Reading
- Meditation
- Prayer
- Contemplation

#### **Colossians 1: 18-23**

Brethren, He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him—provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

## Luke 8: 22-25

One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they put out, and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A windstorm swept down on

the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. They went to him and woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?"

#### Meditation

One day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples and while they were sailing he fell asleep. Although Jesus is God He is also a man. During His earthly life He could become tired, He experienced hunger and thirst and was cold. He traveled a lot across towns and villages and never stayed for a long time in one place. He was teaching. He cured the sick and liberated those with unclean spirits. He spent hours praying alone. Although He acted in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit, he needed rest. He experienced physical and emotional tiredness. He fell asleep and did not wake up even when the storm began. Most probably He did not regain His strength yet.

To cross the lake by boat was typical for the apostles. Some of them were fishermen, so they knew how to steer a boat. They were in a familiar place and were doing what the Lord asked them to do. Moreover, Jesus Himself was with them. What can be better than to be with God and fulfill His will? Then where does the storm come from? Where does the danger come from? Why were the apostles frightened?

The raging waves that flooded the boat frightened them so much that they lost their faith in God, forgot that life and death are in God's hands and that not a hair would fall from a man's head without God's will. Looking at Jesus who was sleeping soundly did not restore their peace. So they woke Him up to say that soon they would die. And when the Lord ceased the storm and there was a calm, frightened and surprised, they could not understand why the wind and water obeyed Him. They did not have faith yet. The Son of God was not recognized in the man who was weary and needed to sleep. They witnessed such a great miracle and did not glorify God, did not rejoice that they were alive, but were frightened and full of thoughts. They had nothing to answer when Jesus asked them: Where is your faith?

To follow Jesus does not mean avoiding trials, sufferings and tragedies. They happen to everyone: good and evil, believers and unbelievers. And everyone can ask Jesus for salvation and help. God wants salvation for His children, He can calm the storm in a person's life so that they will believe and be converted.

## **Thursday**

**Colossians 1: 24-29** 

Luke 9: 7-11

- Reading
- Meditation
- Prayer
- Contemplation

**Colossians 1: 24-29** 

Brethren, I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me.

## Luke 9: 7-11

Now Herod the ruler heard about all that had taken place, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the ancient prophets had arisen. Herod said,

"John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?"

And he tried to see him.

On their return the apostles told Jesus all they had done. He took them with him and withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. When the crowds found out about it, they followed him; and he welcomed them, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured.

#### Meditation

To see Jesus. This is the desire of many people. But the motivation can be different, as well as the experience from such an encounter. Many wanted to see Jesus. He says that the patriarchs and prophets wanted to see Him because they were waiting for the liberation of Israel and the coming of the Messiah. Many ordinary people wanted to see Jesus in order to receive something from Him: healing, forgiveness, words of life, solutions to their problems, bread...

Herod the Great wanted to see the Infant to eliminate the threat to his power. Pilate also wanted to solve a political problem which could negatively affect his career. Herod Antipas, of whom we read today, because of his widely known superstitiousness wanted to see Jesus out of fear of the revenge of the risen John the Baptist, as well as to satisfy his curiosity. As the events of the trial of Christ show, Herod considered Jesus to be someone like a wandering magician or sorcerer, a soothsayer or a healer. Mary Magdalene when she saw that the tomb was empty wanted to see the body of Christ to continue her sorrow, to mourn the One who had broken the chains of death.

For a very long time the apostles wanted to see in Jesus a leader, a powerful guide, the One who would lead them and their people to glory, revive the fallen greatness and give them authority. Do you remember the request of the mother of Jacob and John or their joy that the spirits obeyed them?

Only later, after the Resurrection, they could testify: We have seen the Lord. Three wise men of the East wanted to see the Child in order to worship Him. And Mary wanted to see the Fruit of her womb in order to love Him. Two last examples are real and pure desires to look for God. Often in our lives we do not realize that our aspiration and motivation to develop a relationship with the Lord should be indeed unusual, very deep and intimate. Otherwise, even those desires that at first glance seem to be quite pious and religious will not differ in their essence from the motives of Herod, who tried to see Him.

Friday

Colossians 2: 1-7

Luke 9: 12-17

- Reading
- Meditation
- Prayer
- **Contemplation**

#### Colossians 2: 1-7

Brethren, for I want you to know how much I am struggling for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me face to face. I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I am saying this so that no one may deceive you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, and I rejoice to see your morale and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

## Luke 9: 12-17

The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions;

for we are here in a deserted place." But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each." They did so and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

#### Meditation

Today's Gospel tells us about a great miracle: the crowd was fed with bread and fish. However, Jesus does it in a deserted and empty place when the day has begun to approach its end. The same thing happens in our lives: sometimes it seems to me that although I live with Jesus nothing is happening. Jesus seems to be silent and doing nothing.

Be patient and learn to wait, wait until the evening comes. Such a moment is the time of an action for God. In fact this text describes two miracles not one. Jesus not only fed the people by multiplying the loaves and fish, but also helped his disciples to understand their weakness, that they could not help people without Him, because they had only five miserable loaves and two fish.

If you add the numbers, you will get the number seven. Seven is a sign of completeness in the Holy Scriptures. We also have the seven Sacraments in the Church, which are the spiritual food for the

faithful today. It is important for God that our soul has at least something good in itself. Then He will be able to multiply it and feed others. Whoever has it, so it will be added, and whoever does not have it, what he has will be taken away. When God wants to do something through us, He needs something to hold on to in our hearts. He needs me to have these five loaves and two fish.

If the apostles could not recognize their weakness, there would be no such a miracle. If you want to see miracles in your life – follow their example: do not be afraid to acknowledge your helplessness and inability to do something good on your own, especially for others. Acknowledging one's weakness and helplessness is the path to humility, and humility opens the way to God's action, to God's intervention in our lives. For a broken and contrite heart the Lord will not despise (cf. Psalms 50:19).

Humility is the path to holiness that originates in my confession: Lord, I have nothing on my own, I am not capable of anything without You, please help me to have at least these five loaves and two fish and have mercy on me, a weak sinner.

## Saturday

2 Corinthians 3: 12-18

Luke 6: 1-10

- Reading
- Meditation
- Prayer
- Contemplation

#### 2 Corinthians 3: 12-18

Brethren, since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 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.

## Luke 6: 1-10

One sabbath while Jesus was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them. But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?" Jesus answered, "Have you not

read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions?" Then he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."

On another sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. The scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would cure on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. Even though he knew what they were thinking, he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here." He got up and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?" After looking around at all of them, he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was restored.

#### Meditation

I wonder if the Pharisees who caught the apostles red-handed were hungry? In general, it is strange that they found themselves on the Sabbath with Jesus and His apostles. They must have left the synagogue together and, as described below, watched Jesus. I don't think they would mind eating either, but they restrained themselves because of the Law.

Both groups celebrated the Sabbath, the day of rest and the day of the Lord. Which of the two options was a real celebration? The scribes and Pharisees were focused on catching Jesus in some transgression. They took over the function of inspectors and had no rest. And what are the apostles doing at this time? They behave like children – plucking heads of grain to quench their hunger at least a little. They must feel good to be with Jesus, because they are not in a hurry to have dinner at home. Such a freedom of behavior can really be called a holiday. They were not even hindered by the insidious views of the teachers of the law...

This situation is for us an opportunity to contemplate and test our conscience: Is God for me the Master of my life and of my Sabbath, - the day of rest? Does being with God give my life joy and freedom, or does it create a framework that I am afraid to transgress? Can «inspectors» who care only about outward piety stop me on my way to God?

Jesus shows us how to behave when we are looked at with envy – just do our business. A week has passed... And again Saturday. Again the apostles are with Jesus and Pharisees are watching over Him. And there is a man with a withered right hand. It's probably not easy to have a paralyzed right hand! The love for man motivates Jesus to break the rules and create «uncomfortable» situations to encourage people to think and analyze.

Stretch out your hand! - Jesus says to the man. In other words, He tests him for his ability to be free from human condemnation, from the framework imposed by the Pharisees. And this man responds correctly – he hears the voice of God and fulfills the request of Jesus, so he becomes a participant of a miracle.

Today I stretch out my hand to you, Lord! Teach me to be Your free child!

# What is Skynia Magazine?

**Skynia Magazine** is published with the purpose to help its readers meet the Lord with the help of the Bible.

This is why on most pages of the magazine our readers can find daily meditations on the Word of God: biblical readings according to the liturgical calendar of the UGCC. These meditations are the fruit of the personal prayer of their authors: priests, nuns and laity, who strive to live in the rhythm of the life of the UGCC, trying to tackle present-day issues.

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