

# Spiritual Reflections for the month of December 2024

Please choose a reflection and mediation

## Spiritual Reflection: Meditative Prayer

Did you know that St. Vincent de Paul praises meditation, or meditative prayer?

In an address to nuns, St. Vincent speaks of meditation, calling it “*prayer . . . of understanding.*” We first read a passage of Scripture, after which our “mind wakes up in the presence of God and then occupies itself in seeking to know the meaning . . . and in arousing the affections to seek God and avoid evil. . . This is what is ordinarily called meditation.”<sup>1</sup> Christian meditation can take various forms: These include quietude or stilling of the mind,<sup>2</sup> as well as reading and reflecting on Scripture.

**Question:** When we hear the word “prayer,” we tend to imagine petitionary prayer. This kind of prayer can be useful (e.g., in our Conferences, or with Neighbours in Need, though we need be judicious in this regard: If a Neighbour is not a practicing Christian, (s)he will not necessarily be comfortable with it). But why not consider the value of *meditative prayer*: Have you experimented with meditative prayer? If so, what is your experience of such prayer?

- Alexander Damm, St. Jerome Conference, Peel North PC

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<sup>1</sup> From “36: Conference on the Good Use of Instruction” (May 1, 1648), in *St. Vincent de Paul and Mental Prayer: A Selection of Letters and Addresses*, trans. Joseph Leonard (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1925), 146.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Thomas Keating, OSB, *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (New York: Crossroad, 2009); cf. Henri Le Saux, OSB (Swami Abhishiktananda), *Prayer: Exploring Contemplative Prayer through Eastern and Western Spirituality* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1998 [1973]).

## Awaiting in Joyful Anticipation

### **Gospel: (Luke 21:25-28, 34-36)**

Jesus said to his disciples: “There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish, distraught at the roaring of the sea and the waves. Men will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the earth. The powers in the heavens will be shaken. After that, men will see the Son of Man coming on a cloud with great power and glory. When these things begin to happen, stand up straight and raise your heads, for your ransom is near at hand. Be on guard... The great day will suddenly close in on you like a trap. The day I speak of will come upon all who dwell on the face of the earth, so be on the watch. Pray constantly for the strength to escape whatever is in prospect, and to stand secure before the Son of Man.”

### **Vincentian Meditation:**

Waiting in joyful anticipation...if we are to rejoice in the grace of God, we must have eyes that see and ears that hear. That in turn demands a reflecting heart, the sort of heart which Our Lady had and with which, she “pondered all things in her heart.” Our Lady has a marvelous capacity for wonder. There can be no wonder in our lives without silence. We are called to the service of the persons in need, but our service must come from a heart which resembles that of Our Lady who knew how to be silent, who knew how to wonder, who knew how to marvel at the grace of God, without which we can do nothing. (McCullen, *Deep Down Things*, p. 56)

### **Vincentian Reflection:**

How will you “await” in joyful anticipation, silence and wonder for Christmas this Advent?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Lord, as we await the fulfillment of your promise,

**- give us a heart that knows how to be silent.**

You come as a visible sign of love,

**- give us a heart that knows how to wonder.**

Strengthen us by your grace,

**- give us a heart that lives in joyful anticipation.**

**Amen**