

## Readings for Thursday, April 18, 2024

**Juana Inés de la Cruz, Monastic and Theologian, 1695**

### Psalm 34:11-18

#### *Benedicam Dominum*

- 11 Come, children, and listen to me; \*  
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
- 12 Who among you loves life \*  
and desires long life to enjoy prosperity?
- 13 Keep your tongue from evil-speaking \*  
and your lips from lying words.
- 14 Turn from evil and do good; \*  
seek peace and pursue it.
- 15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, \*  
and his ears are open to their cry.
- 16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, \*  
to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.
- 17 The righteous cry, and the LORD hears them \*  
and delivers them from all their troubles.
- 18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted \*  
and will save those whose spirits are crushed.

## **Judith 16:1–10**

Judith said,

Begin a song to my God with tambourines,  
sing to my Lord with cymbals.

Raise to him a new psalm;  
exalt him, and call upon his name.

For the Lord is a God who crushes wars;  
he sets up his camp among his people;  
he delivered me from the hands of my pursuers.

The Assyrian came down from the mountains of the north;  
he came with myriads of his warriors;

their numbers blocked up the wadis,  
and their cavalry covered the hills.

He boasted that he would burn up my territory,  
and kill my young men with the sword,

and dash my infants to the ground,  
and seize my children as booty,  
and take my virgins as spoil.

But the Lord Almighty has foiled them  
by the hand of a woman.

For their mighty one did not fall by the hands of the young men,  
nor did the sons of the Titans strike him down,  
nor did tall giants set upon him;

but Judith daughter of Merari  
with the beauty of her countenance undid him.

For she put away her widow's clothing  
to exalt the oppressed in Israel.

She anointed her face with perfume;  
she fastened her hair with a tiara  
and put on a linen gown to beguile him.

Her sandal ravished his eyes,  
her beauty captivated his mind,  
and the sword severed his neck!

The Persians trembled at her boldness,  
the Medes were daunted at her daring.

## **Matthew 5:17-20**

Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

### **Collect:**

Almighty God, Source of all knowledge, we give you thanks for the witness of your servant Juana Inés de la Cruz in her fierce passion for learning and creativity. Teach us to be faithful stewards of our minds and hearts, so that, following her example, we might forever proclaim the riches of your unending love in Jesus Christ our Lord. Through Jesus Christ who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

# **Juana Inés de la Cruz**

*Monastic and Theologian, 1695*

Juana Inés de Asbaje y Ramirez de Santillana was born the illegitimate daughter of a Spanish captain and a creole woman on November 12, 1648, in the town of San Miguel Nepantla near Mexico City, Mexico.

Raised by her grandparents in Amecameca, Juana Inés established herself from a young age as a talented thinker and writer. She is reported to have learned to read and write by the age of three, to do accounting by the age of five, to compose religious poetry by the age of eight, to teach Latin to children by age thirteen, and to master Greek logic by adolescence.

Prevented from university studies in Mexico City because she was a woman, Juana Inés continued to study privately while serving as a lady-in-waiting to the Vicereine Leonor Carreto, who also served as Juana Inés' tutor, confidant, and friend. By the time she was seventeen, Juana Inés was able to sit before a tribunal of theologians, philosophers, justices, and poets to defend her knowledge and skill, thus expanding her renown as a scholar and a poet.

Juana Inés spent a short time in 1667 living in a cloistered monastery of Carmelite nuns, but found the community's discipline too severe to allow her academic and creative genius room to grow. In 1669 Juana Inés entered the monastery of the Order of Saint Jerome, a more relaxed community, and took the religious name Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (Sister Joan Agnes of the Cross in English).

Sor Juana Inés' literary career blossomed in the monastery, which drew both the affirmation and ire of ecclesiastical and secular society. Her detractors insisted that a nun had no business writing about secular studies such as philosophy or natural science, while her admirers praised her concise theories and elegant prose. In the midst of a very public intellectual career, Sor Juana Inés managed to balance religious devotion and life in community. She is claimed to have said: "One can perfectly well philosophize while cooking supper."

Giving in to threats of official ecclesiastical censure, Sor Juana Inés stopped publishing her writing by 1693. Following her retirement from public intellectual life, Sor Juana Inés is reported to have sold her collection of musical and scientific instruments, as well as her library of more than 4,000 books. Of her extensive correspondence and publications, only a few of her writings have survived but she is hailed by contemporary critics as a major figure in indigenous Mexican literature.

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz died on April 17, 1695, while serving her religious community during an outbreak of the plague.