

# Lectio Divina

SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

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“What page, what passage of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is not the truest of guides for human life?” ~Saint Benedict, from the *Rule of Saint Benedict* (73:3)

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***“He will never let the trial surpass the strength He gives you, and at the very moment you think yourself overwhelmed by sorrow, He will lift you up and give you peace.”***  
~Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne

**Monday, November 18 ~ Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time**  
**Dedication of the Churches of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles;**  
**Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne, Virgin**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 18:35-43** As Jesus approached Jericho a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging, and hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what was happening. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” He shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!” The people walking in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent, but he kept calling out all the more, “Son of David, have pity on me!” Then Jesus stopped and ordered that he be brought to him; and when he came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He replied, “Lord, please let me see.” Jesus told him, “Have sight; your faith has saved you.” He immediately received his sight and followed him, giving glory to God. When they saw this, all the people gave praise to God.

**Meditation:** Bartimaeus knew who Jesus was and had heard of his fame for healing, but until now had no means of making contact with the Son of David, a clear reference and title for the Messiah. It took raw courage and persistence for Bartimaeus to get the attention of Jesus over the din of a noisy throng who crowded around Jesus as he made his way out of town. Why was the crowd annoyed with the blind man's persistent shouts? He was disturbing their peace and interrupting Jesus' discourse. It was common for a rabbi to teach as he walked with others. Jesus was on his way to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem and a band of pilgrims followed him. When the crowd tried to silence the blind man he overpowered them with his emotional outburst and thus caught the attention of Jesus.

**Prayer ~ Dedication of the Churches of Saints Peter and Paul:** Defend your Church, O Lord, by the protection of the holy Apostles, that, as she received from them the beginnings of her knowledge of things divine, so through them she may receive, even to the end of the world, an increase in heavenly grace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**Prayer ~ Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne:** Almighty God, who filled the heart of Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne with charity and missionary zeal, and gave her the desire to make you known among all peoples, grant us to follow her way and fill us with that same love and zeal to extend your Kingdom to the ends of the earth. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**Contemplation:** This incident reveals something important about how God interacts with us. The blind man was determined to get Jesus' attention and he was persistent in the face of opposition. Jesus could have ignored or rebuffed him because he was disturbing his talk and his audience. Jesus showed that acting was more important than talking. This man was in desperate need and Jesus was ready not only to empathize with his suffering but to relieve it as well. A great speaker can command attention and respect, but a man or woman with a helping hand and a big heart is loved more. Jesus commends Bartimaeus for recognizing who he is with the eyes of faith and grants him physical sight as well. Do you recognize your need for God's healing grace? Do you seek Jesus out, like Bartimaeus, with persistent faith and trust?

**Tuesday, November 19 ~ Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 19:1-10** At that time Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to

see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

**Meditation:** What would you do – how would you react – if Jesus Christ knocked on your door and said, "I must stay at your house today"? Would you be excited or embarrassed? Jesus often "dropped-in" at unexpected times and he often visited the "uninvited" – the poor, the lame, and even public sinners like Zacchaeus, the tax collector! Tax collectors were despised and treated as outcasts, no doubt because they over-charged people and accumulated great wealth at the expense of others. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector and was much hated by all the people. Why would Jesus single him out for the honor of staying at his home? Zacchaeus needed God's merciful love and in his encounter with Jesus he found more than he imagined possible. He shows the depth of his repentance by deciding to give half of his goods to the poor and to use the other half for making restitution for fraud. Zacchaeus' testimony included more than words. His change of heart resulted in a change of life, a change that the whole community could experience as genuine. The Lord is always ready to make his home with us. Do you make room for him in your heart, your home, and in every area of your life?

**Prayer:** Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Folks, each of us has been invited – and that invitation "to climb down from that tree" comes from no one other than Jesus Christ. He invites us to come down from that tree and embrace Him, and in doing so bring positive changes to our lives. Now is the time to come down from that tree. What's holding you back? Simply say: "Here I am, Lord."

### **Wednesday, November 20 ~ Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 19:11-28** While people were listening to Jesus speak, he proceeded to tell a parable because he was near Jerusalem and they thought that the Kingdom of God would appear there immediately. So he said, "A nobleman went off to a distant country to obtain the kingship for himself and then to return. He called ten of his servants and gave them ten gold coins and told them, 'Engage in trade with these until I return.' His fellow citizens, however, despised him and sent a delegation after him to announce, 'We do not want this man to be our king.' But when he returned after obtaining the kingship, he had the servants called, to whom he had given the money, to learn what they had gained by trading. The first came forward and said, 'Sir, your gold coin has earned ten additional ones.' He replied, 'Well done, good servant! You have been faithful in this very small matter; take charge of ten cities.' Then the second came and reported, 'Your gold coin, sir, has earned five more.' And to this servant too he said, 'You, take charge of five cities.' Then the other servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your gold coin; I kept it stored away in a handkerchief, for I was afraid of you, because you are a demanding man; you take up what you did not lay down and you harvest what you did not plant.' He said to him, 'With your own words I shall condemn you, you wicked servant. You knew I was a demanding man, taking up what I did not lay down and harvesting what I did not plant; why did you not put my money in a bank? Then on my return I would have collected it with interest.' And to those standing by he said, 'Take the gold coin from him and give it to the servant who has ten.' But they said to him, 'Sir, he has ten gold coins.' He replied, 'I tell you, to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. Now as for those enemies of mine who did not want me as their king, bring them here and slay them before me.'" After he had said this, he proceeded on his journey up to Jerusalem.

**Meditation:** The Jewish people in Jesus' time had a heightened sense that the Messiah would appear soon to usher in the kingdom of God's peace and righteousness on the earth. Jesus, in fact, spoke in messianic terms of the coming reign of God. Perhaps his entry into Jerusalem would bring about such a change and overthrow of Roman domination. Jesus speaks to their longing for a new kingdom in the parable of a nobleman who went away to receive a kingdom. The parable reveals something important about how God works his plan and purpose with humans. The parable speaks first of the king's trust in his subjects. While

he goes away he leaves them with his money to use as they think best. While there were no strings attached, this was obviously a test to see if the king's subjects would be faithful and reliable in their use of the money entrusted to them. Third, the king rewards those who are faithful and he punishes those who sit by idly and who do nothing with his money.

**Prayer:** Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** The Lord entrusts us with his gifts and graces and he gives us freedom to use them as we think best. With each gift and talent, the Lord gives sufficient grace and energy for using them in a fitting way. As the parable of the talents shows, God abhors indifference and an attitude that says it's not worth trying. God honors those who use their talents and gifts for doing good. Those who are faithful with even a little are entrusted with more! But those who neglect or squander what God has entrusted to them will lose what they have. There is an important lesson here for us. No one can stand still for long in the Christian life. We either get more or we lose what we have. We either advance towards God or we slip back. Do you trust in God's grace to make good use of the gifts and talents he has given you?

### **Thursday, November 21 ~ Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 12:46-50** While He was still speaking to the people, behold, His mother and His brethren stood outside, asking to speak to Him. But He replied to the man who told Him, "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren?" And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Here are My mother and My brethren! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother, and sister, and mother."

**Meditation:** Jesus is God's love incarnate - God's love made flesh (ref. 1 John 4:9-10). That is why Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep and the shepherd who seeks out the sheep who have strayed and lost their way. God is like the father who yearns for his prodigal son to return home and then throws a great party for him when he repents and comes back. Jesus offered up his life on the cross for our sake, so that we could be forgiven and restored to unity with God. It is through Jesus that we become the adopted children of God - his own sons and daughters. That is why Jesus told his disciples that they would have many new friends and family relationships in his kingdom. Whoever receives the Sacrament of Baptism and who does the will of God is a friend of God and a member of his family.

**Prayer:** As we venerate the glorious memory of the most holy Virgin Mary, grant, we pray, O Lord, through her intercession, that we, too, may merit to receive from the fullness of your grace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Our life with Jesus Christ changes the order of relationships and shows that true kinship is not just a matter of flesh and blood. Our adoption as sons and daughters of God transforms all our relationships and requires a new order of loyalty to God first and to his kingdom of righteousness and peace. The Sacrament of Baptism begins our life with Christ. "God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people" (Rite of Baptism). "*Name of Baptized*, you have become a new creation, and have clothed yourself in Christ" (Rite of Baptism). "Dearly beloved, this child has been reborn in baptism. He (she) is now called the child of God, for so indeed he (she) is" (Rite of Baptism). Do you want to grow in love and friendship? Allow God's Holy Spirit to conform your heart, mind, and will to enable you to faithfully live and love as Christ does.

**About the Presentation of Mary:** The Scriptures tells us nothing of Mary's hidden life. The inspired Word of God gives us no word about her Presentation in the Temple, the feast which we celebrate each year on November 21st. However, we do have the testimonies of tradition which are based on accounts which come to us from apostolic times. That which is known about the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple is found in the Apocrypha, principally in chapter seven of the *Protoevangelium of James*, which has been dated by historians prior to the year 200 AD. This book gives us a detailed account in which Mary's father, Joachim, tells Anna his wife that he wishes to bring their child to the Temple of the Lord. Anna responds that they should wait until the child is three years old lest she yearn for her parents. When the day arrived, the undefiled daughters of the Hebrews were invited to accompany Mary with their

lamps burning to the Temple. There the priest received her, blessed her, and kissed her in welcome. He proclaimed, "The Lord has magnified thy name in all generations. In thee, the Lord will manifest His redemption to the sons of Israel." Mary was placed on the third step of the Temple and there danced with joy and all the house of Israel loved her. It was there that she was nurtured and her parents returned, glorifying the Almighty. This story is a legend with no foundation in history and the point of the story is to show that even in her childhood Mary was completely dedicated to God. However, it is from this very account that arose the feast of Mary's Presentation. Historians tell us that the Emperor Justinian built a splendid church dedicated to Mary in the Temple area in Jerusalem. It was dedicated on November 21, 543 but was destroyed by the Persians within a century. Many of the early church Fathers such as St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople (+730) and St. John Damascene, his contemporary, preached magnificent homilies on this feast referring to Mary as that special plant or flower which was being nurtured for better things." She was planted in the House of God, nourished by the Holy Spirit and kept her body and soul spotless to receive God in her bosom. He Who is all-holy rests among the holy." We know that in the Byzantine Church this feast is considered one of the twelve great feasts of the liturgical year, called the *Dodecaorton*. Scholars believe that Mary's Presentation in the Temple is considered a major feast for the Eastern churches celebrating the same values that the Western church celebrates in the feast of the Immaculate Conception. (Excerpted from *Presentation of Mary* by Fr. Matthew Mauriello)

## **Friday, November 22 ~ Thirty-Third Week in Ordinary Time** **Saint Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 19:45-48** Jesus entered the temple area and proceeded to drive out those who were selling things, saying to them, "It is written, My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves." And every day he was teaching in the temple area. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people, meanwhile, were seeking to put him to death, but they could find no way to accomplish their purpose because all the people were hanging on his words.

**Meditation:** Foolishly, few seem to pay much attention to God's judgments today. His acts of judgments, nonetheless, are intended to bring us into greater purity, holiness, and reverence for God's word of truth and love. Jesus went to Jerusalem, knowing he would meet certain death on the cross, but victory as well for our sake. His act of judgment in the temple is meant to be a prophetic sign and warning to the people that God takes our worship very seriously. In this incident we see Jesus' startling and swift action in cleansing the temple of those who were using it to exploit the worshipers of God. The money changers took advantage of the poor and forced them to pay many times more than was right— in the house of the Lord no less! Their robbery of the poor was not only dishonoring to God but unjust toward their neighbor. In justification for his audacious action Jesus quotes from the prophets Isaiah (56:7) and Jeremiah (7:11). His act of judgment aims to purify the worship of God's people and to discipline their erring ways. Despite the objections of the religious leaders, all the people present stood in awe of Jesus and they "hung upon his words."

**Prayer:** O God, who gladden us each year with the feast day of your handmaid Saint Cecilia, grant, we pray, that what has been devoutly handed down concerning her may offer us examples to imitate and proclaim the wonders worked in his servants by Christ your Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** The message in today's Gospel is short and simple: Grow in what you know is right, give praise to God for all the beauty and knowledge that continues to be created for us to enjoy and learn from the beauty and knowledge that enriches our lives. To be true to ourselves and not steal the qualities, the success, or what we see as the riches of others. Jesus has shared with us the Good News about how to love one another, to appreciate one another, to praise one another and to praise God for all that has been given uniquely to each of us. We are asked to continue to grow in our love of God and our fellow human beings and to not let those who are fearful, resentful or wrongfully prideful; steal our gifts or put to death our abilities to use our gifts to continue to enrich all of human kind.

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops;  
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