

# 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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**“Dear families: We need God: all of us! We need His help, His strength, His blessing, His mercy, His forgiveness. And we need simplicity to pray as a family: simplicity is necessary! Praying the Our Father together, around the table, is not something extraordinary: it’s easy. And praying the Rosary together, as a family, is very beautiful and a source of great strength! And also praying for one another! The husband for his wife, the wife for her husband, both together for their children, the children for their grandparents....praying for each other. This is what it means to pray in the family and it is what makes the family strong: prayer.”**

~POPE FRANCIS, HOMILY EXCERPT, OCTOBER 27, 2013

### **Monday, November 25 ~ Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Catherine of Alexandria, Virgin and Martyr**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 21:1-4** When Jesus looked up he saw some wealthy people putting their offerings into the treasury and he noticed a poor widow putting in two small coins. He said, “I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood.”

**Meditation:** Do you know the joy of selfless giving and love for others? True love doesn't calculate; it spends lavishly! Jesus drove this point home to his disciples while sitting in the temple and observing people offering their tithes. Jesus praised a poor widow who gave the smallest of coins in contrast with the rich who gave greater sums. How can someone in poverty give more than someone who has ample means? Jesus' answer is very simple: love is more precious than gold or wealth! Jesus taught that real giving must come from the heart. A gift that is given with a grudge or for display loses its value. But a gift given out of love, with a spirit of generosity and sacrifice, is precious. The amount or size of the gift doesn't matter as much as the cost to the giver. The poor widow could have kept one of her coins, but instead she recklessly gave away all she had! Jesus praised someone who gave barely a penny — how insignificant a sum — because it was everything she had, her whole living. What we have to offer may look very small and not worth much, but if we put all we have at the Lord's disposal, no matter how insignificant it may seem, then God can do with it and with us what is beyond our reckoning. Do you give out of love and gratitude for what God has already given to you?

**Prayer:** Almighty ever-living God, who gave Saint Catherine of Alexandria to your people as a Virgin and an invincible Martyr, grant that through her intercession we may be strengthened in faith and constancy and spend ourselves without reserve for the unity of the Church. 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:** Why does Jesus hold up this woman as an example? Surely we should take care of our needs and those of our families. Yet Jesus indicates that she has “put in more” than the others. What message is the woman sending by her act? She is saying, “Take, Lord, and receive my all. I surrender myself to you. I believe that you will provide what I need. I am here ready to do your will.” The wealthy people in today's Gospel were hedging their bets. They gave, but kept a healthy reserve. They wanted to please God, but not if it hurt them too much. They believed, but apparently had their doubts. Jesus approved of her actions because they are consistent with His message to us. Taking this to the parish level, are we more like the widow or the wealthy when it comes to the offertory – our offering to God – in supporting the mission of our Church? Could we afford to give more, or are we holding back?

### **Tuesday, November 26 ~ Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 21:5-11** While some people were speaking about how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings, Jesus said, “All that you see here– the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down.” Then they asked him, “Teacher,

when will this happen? And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?" He answered, "See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time has come.' Do not follow them! When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end." Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place; and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky."

**Meditation:** Note how Jesus' prophecy is a two-edged sword, because it points not only to God's judgment, but also to his saving action and mercy. Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem and the dire consequences for all who would reject him and his saving message. While the destruction of Jerusalem's temple was determined (it was razed by the Romans in 70 A.D.), there remained for its inhabitants a narrow open door leading to deliverance. Jesus says: "I am the door; whoever enters by me will be saved" (John 10:9). Jesus willingly set his face toward Jerusalem, knowing that he would meet betrayal, rejection, and death on a cross. His death on the cross, however, brought about victory and salvation, not only for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but for all – both Jew and gentile – who would accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Is your life securely submitted to the lordship of Jesus Christ?

**Prayer:** Stir up the will of your faithful, we pray, O Lord, that striving more eagerly to bring your divine work to fruitful completion, they may receive in greater measure the healing remedies your kindness bestows. 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:** A retired judge, Robert H. Bork, wrote a book a few decades ago entitled, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*. His message sounds an alarm about the moral crisis and decay of culture which he sees in Western society. We often don't recognize the moral crisis and spiritual conflict of our age, until something "shakes us up" to the reality of our present condition. The reward for the righteous and the penalty for the unrighteous are not always experienced in this life; but they are sure to come in the day of judgment. There will be persecution, suffering, and difficulties in this age until the Lord comes again. God intends our anticipation of his final judgment to be a powerful deterrent to wrongdoing. God extends grace and mercy to all who will heed his call and his warning. Do you take advantage of God's grace and mercy to seek his kingdom and to pursue his will? Recall what we read in scripture: "Remain faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." (ref. Revelation 2:10C)

### **Wednesday, November 27 ~ Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 21:12-19** Jesus said to the crowd: "They will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony. Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

**Meditation:** If the gospel message is good news, then why do so many oppose it with hostility and even violence? Jesus warns his followers that they will be confronted with persecution, wickedness, false teaching, and temptation. The real enemy of the Gospel is Satan who uses fear and hatred to provoke hostility in others towards those who follow Christ. And what is Jesus' response to this hostility and opposition? Love and truth. Only love can defeat prejudice, intolerance, and hatred. God's love purifies our hearts and minds of all that would divide and tear people apart. The truth is also essential for overcoming evil and tribulation in the world. Satan deceives and sin blinds the heart and mind. Only God's truth can free us from error and spiritual blindness. This Gospel is God's word of truth and salvation. That is why Jesus tells his disciples to proclaim the Gospel throughout the whole world, even in the midst of opposition and persecution.

**Prayer:** Stir up the will of your faithful, we pray, O Lord, that striving more eagerly to bring your divine work to fruitful completion, they may receive in greater measure the healing remedies your kindness bestows. 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 word "martyr" in Greek means "witness." The Book of Revelation says that "Jesus was the faithful witness ...who freed us from our sins by his blood" (Rev. 1:5). Tertullian, a second century convert who saw the early Christians singing as they went out to die by the hands of their persecutors, said: "The blood of the martyrs is seed." Their blood is the seed of new Christians, the seed

of the church. The third century bishop, Cyprian said: "When persecution comes, God's soldiers are put to the test, and heaven is open to martyrs. We have not enlisted in an army to think of peace and to decline battle, for we see that the Lord has taken first place in the conflict." True martyrs live and die as witnesses of the gospel. They overcome their enemies through persevering hope and courage, sacrificial love and forbearance, kindness and compassion. God may call some of us to be martyrs for our faith. But for most of us, our call is to be 'dry' martyrs who bear testimony to the joy and power of the gospel in the midst of daily challenges, contradictions, temptations and adversities which come our way as we follow the Lord. What most attracts others to the truth and power of the gospel? When they see Christians loving their enemies, being joyful in suffering, patient in adversity, pardoning injuries, and showing comfort and compassion to the hopeless and the helpless. Jesus tells us that we do not need to fear our adversaries. God will give us sufficient grace, strength, and wisdom to face any trial and to answer any challenge to our faith. Are you eager to bear witness to the joy and freedom of the Gospel?

## **Thursday, November 28 ~ Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time** **~ Thanksgiving Day ~**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 17:11-19** As he continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten lepers met him. They stood at a distance from him and raised their voice, saying, "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!" And when he saw them, he said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." As they were going they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."

**Meditation:** When we think about giving thanks to God, are you like the one leper who returned, or are you with the other nine who did not give thanks? Why would only one leper out of ten return to show gratitude? Gratefulness is related to "grace" – which means the release of loveliness. Gratitude is the homage of the heart which responds with graciousness in expressing an act of thanksgiving. The Samaritan approached Jesus reverently and gave praise to God. If we do not recognize and appreciate the mercy shown us we will be ungrateful. Ingratitude is forgetfulness or a poor return for kindness received. Ingratitude easily leads to lack of charity and intolerance towards others. It easily leads to lack of charity and intolerance towards others, as well as to other sins, such as discontent, dissatisfaction, complaining, grumbling, pride and presumption. How often have we been ungrateful to our parents, siblings, priests, teachers, co-workers, neighbors, waiters and waitresses, and so many others? How often have we failed individually and collectively to give thanks to God? Now ask yourself: Why do I act this way? Am I that self-centered? Is not giving thanks part of my being? Let us give thanks to God today and every day, and adopt a life expressing gratitude and thanks to all from the heart, beginning first and foremost with God.

**Prayer:** Father all-powerful, your gifts of love are countless and your goodness infinite; as we come before you on Thanksgiving Day with gratitude for your kindness, open our hearts to have concern for every man, woman, and child, so that we may share your gifts in loving service. 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.

**Washington and Lincoln:** Go to the two web page links below and learn about what President George Washington and President Abraham Lincoln said and did in establishing and reaffirming Thanksgiving Day in our nation. Share this information with your family, especially our young people!

<https://www.mountvernon.org/education/primary-sources-2/article/thanksgiving-proclamation-of-1789/>  
<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/thanks.htm>

**Contemplation:** Is today, Thanksgiving Day, simply a day for feasting, "turkey trot" 5k runs and football? Or have you given any thought to what this day is truly about – giving thanks to God for all that he has done for you, the great and the simple things in life, and life itself. Begin this day by giving true thanks to God – begin the day with Mass; family football games and community 5k runs can begin later. As Americans, but more importantly as Catholics, may we be blessed with a fresh awareness of the loving Most Blessed Trinity from whom all good things come, may we give thanks for what has been bestowed upon us, and may all of us have a renewed interest in helping those who are less fortunate – especially the poor, the hungry, and the homeless.

## Friday, November 29 ~ Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 4:18-22** As Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him.

**Meditation:** Jesus speaks the same message to us today: we will "catch people" for the kingdom of God if we allow the light of Jesus Christ to shine through us. God wants others to see the light of Christ in us in the way we live, speak, and witness the joy of the gospel. Paul the Apostles says, "But thanks be to God, who in Christ Jesus always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (2 Corinthians 2:15). Do you show others around you the joy of the gospel and do you pray for your neighbors, co-workers, and relatives that they may come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and grow in the knowledge of his love?

**Prayer:** Stir up the will of your faithful, we pray, O Lord, that striving more eagerly to bring your divine work to fruitful completion, they may receive in greater measure the healing remedies your kindness bestows. 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:** What is God really calling you to do in life? As God calls you, how are you responding? Are you anywhere near ready to respond? When Jesus began his ministry he went every where he could — the streets, towns, hills and lakeside of Galilee — to speak to people about the kingdom of God. He chose as his closest friends and coworkers those who were ready to follow as his disciples and he gave them an unusual mission — "to catch people for the kingdom of God". What kind of disciples did Jesus choose? Smelly fishermen! In the choice of the first apostles we see a characteristic feature of Jesus' work: he chose very ordinary people. They were non-professionals, had no wealth or position of power or fame in society. They were chosen from the common people who did ordinary things, had no special marks of education, and no social advantages. Jesus wanted ordinary people who could take an assignment and do it extraordinarily well. He chose these individuals, not for what they were, but for what they would be capable of becoming under his direction and power. When the Lord calls us to be his disciples, we must not think we have nothing to offer him in exchange. The Lord takes what ordinary people, like us, can offer and uses it for greatness in his kingdom. Do you believe that God wants to work through you and in you for his glory? He does, you know. Open yourself — your mind and your heart — so that His will can be accomplished through your earthly life.

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops;  
prayers are from *The Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing, 2011;  
information about saints, solemnities, feasts and memorials courtesy of Catholic Culture.

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*The Season of Advent begins Sunday, December 1st.  
As a new liturgical year begins in the Church,  
"Year A" Sunday Cycle scripture readings also begin, and  
"Cycle II" Weekday readings begin as well.*

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