

# 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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**Realities are greater than ideas. This principle has to do with incarnation of the Word and its being put into practice: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is from God" (1 Jn 4:2). The principle of reality, of a word already made flesh and constantly striving to take flesh anew, is essential to evangelization. It helps us to see that the Church's history is a history of salvation, to be mindful of those saints who inculturated the Gospel in the life of our peoples and to reap the fruits of the Church's rich bimillennial tradition, without pretending to come up with a system of thought detached from this treasury, as if we wanted to reinvent the Gospel. At the same time, this principle impels us to put the Word into practice, to perform works of justice and charity which make that word fruitful. Not to put the Word into practice, not to make it reality, is to build on sand, to remain in the realm of pure ideas and to end up in a lifeless and unfruitful self-centredness and gnosticism. ~POPE FRANCIS, EVANGELII GAUDIUM, 233**

**Monday, January 6 ~ Season of Christmas  
Saint André Bessette, Religious**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17,23-25** When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: "*Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen. From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."* He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people. His fame spread to all of Syria, and they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases and racked with pain, those who were possessed, lunatics, and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan followed him.

**Meditation:** In announcing the good news, Jesus made two very simple and achievable demands: (1) repent, and (2) believe! Repentance requires a life-change and a transformation of heart and mind. The Holy Spirit gives us a repentant heart, a true sorrow and hatred for sin and its consequences, and a firm resolution to avoid it in the future. The Holy Spirit gives us grace to see our sin for what it is – rebellion and a rejection of the love of God. God's grace helps us to turn away from all that would keep us from his love. Faith or belief is an entirely free gift which God makes to us. Believing is only possible by grace and the help of the Holy Spirit who moves the heart and converts it to God. The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the mind and makes it easy for us to accept and believe the truth. To believe is to take Jesus at his word, to believe that God loved us so much that he sent his only begotten Son to redeem us from the slavery of sin and death. God made the supreme sacrifice of his Son on the cross to bring us back to himself. Do you know the love of God that surpasses all else and that impels us to give him our all? God wants to change our way of thinking and transform our lives by the power of his word.

**Prayer:** Lord our God, friend of the lowly, who gave your servant, Saint Andre Bessette, a great devotion to Saint Joseph and a special commitment to the poor and afflicted, help us through his intercession to follow his example of prayer and love and so come to share with him in your glory. 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:** On more than on occasion John the Baptist's enemies sought to silence him. But the truths of sacred scripture cannot be silenced. As soon as John had finished his testimony Jesus began his in Galilee. Galilee was at the crossroads of the world and much traffic passed through this little region. It had been assigned to the tribes of Asher, Naphtali and Zebulun when the Israelites first came into the land (read Joshua 9). For a long time it had been under Gentile occupation. Isaiah foretold (read Isaiah 9) that the good news of salvation would be proclaimed in this land and reach to the Gentiles. Jesus begins the proclamation of the gospel here to fulfill the word of God. The Old Testament prophets spoke of God's promise to send a Redeemer who would establish God's rule. That time is now fulfilled in Jesus.

**About Saint André Bessette:** Sickness and weakness dogged André from birth. He was the eighth of twelve children born to a French Canadian couple near Montreal. Adopted at twelve, when both parents had died, he became a farmhand. Various trades followed: shoemaker, baker, blacksmith—all failures. He was a factory worker in the United States during the boom times of the Civil War. At twenty-five, he applied for entrance into the Congregation of the Holy Cross. After a year's novitiate, he was not admitted because of his weak health. But with an extension and the urging of Bishop Bourget (see Marie-Rose Durocher, October 6), he was finally received. He was given the humble job of doorkeeper at Notre Dame College in Montreal, with additional duties as sacristan, laundry worker and messenger. "When I joined this community, the superiors showed me the door, and I remained forty years." In his little room near the door, he spent much of the night on his knees. On his windowsill, facing Mount Royal, was a small statue of Saint Joseph, to whom he had been devoted since childhood. When asked about it he said, "Some day, Saint Joseph is going to be honored in a very special way on Mount Royal!" When he heard someone was ill, he visited to bring cheer and to pray with the sick person. He would rub the sick person lightly with oil taken from a lamp burning in the college chapel. Word of healing powers began to spread. When an epidemic broke out at a nearby college, André volunteered to nurse. Not one person died. The trickle of sick people to his door became a flood. His superiors were uneasy; diocesan authorities were suspicious; doctors called him a quack. "I do not cure," he said again and again. "Saint Joseph cures." In the end he needed four secretaries to handle the eighty thousand letters he received each year. For many years the Holy Cross authorities had tried to buy land on Mount Royal. Brother André and others climbed the steep hill and planted medals of Saint Joseph. Suddenly, the owners yielded. André collected two hundred dollars to build a small chapel and began receiving visitors there—smiling through long hours of listening, applying Saint Joseph's oil. Some were cured, some not. The pile of crutches, canes and braces grew. On October 17, 2010, Pope Benedict XVI formally declared sainthood for André.

## **Tuesday, January 7 ~ Season of Christmas** **Saint Raymond of Penafort, Priest**

**Holy Gospel: Mark 6:34-44** When Jesus saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. By now it was already late and his disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already very late. Dismiss them so that they can go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy themselves something to eat." He said to them in reply, "Give them some food yourselves." But they said to him, "Are we to buy two hundred days' wages worth of food and give it to them to eat?" He asked them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out they said, "Five loaves and two fish." So he gave orders to have them sit down in groups on the green grass. The people took their places in rows by hundreds and by fifties. Then, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; he also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. And they picked up twelve wicker baskets full of fragments and what was left of the fish. Those who ate of the loaves were five thousand men.

**Meditation:** Many ask what the significance of this miracle conveys to us? The miraculous feeding of such a great multitude pointed to God's provision of manna in the wilderness for the people of Israel under Moses' leadership. This food foreshadowed the true heavenly bread which Jesus would offer his followers. The sign of the multiplication of the loaves when the Lord says the blessing, breaks and distributes through his disciples prefigures the superabundance of the unique bread of his Eucharist or Lord's Supper. Jesus makes a claim only God can make: He is the true bread of heaven that can satisfy the deepest hunger we experience. The feeding of the five thousand shows the remarkable generosity of God and his great kindness towards us. In the multiplication of the loaves and fishes we see a sign and a symbol of what God always does. When God gives, he gives abundantly. He gives more than we need for ourselves that we may have something to share with others, especially those who lack what they need. God takes the little we have and multiplies it for the good of others.

**Prayer:** O God, who adorned the Priest Saint Raymond with the virtue of outstanding mercy and compassion for sinners and for captives, grant us, through his intercession, that, released from slavery to sin, we may carry out in freedom of spirit what is pleasing to you. 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:** Despite what we may think or feel, no matter what we may purchase, the trappings and allurements of this earthly world will not bring us true and lasting happiness. Why? Nothing can satisfy the deepest longing and desire of the heart, except God alone! Do you believe that is true? Of all the miracles Jesus did, this is the only one which is repeated in all four gospels. A great multitude had gathered to hear Jesus, no doubt because they were hungry for the word of life. Jesus' disciples wanted to send them away at the end of the day because they did not have the resources to feed them. They even complained how much money it would take to feed such a crowd – at least six month's wages! Jesus took the little they had – five loaves and two fish – and giving thanks to his heavenly Father, distributed to all until they were satisfied of their hunger. They took up what was left over, twelve baskets full so that nothing would be wasted.

### **Wednesday, January 8 ~ Season of Christmas**

**Holy Gospel: Mark 6:45-52** After the five thousand had eaten and were satisfied, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side toward Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And when he had taken leave of them, he went off to the mountain to pray. When it was evening, the boat was far out on the sea and he was alone on shore. Then he saw that they were tossed about while rowing, for the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out. They had all seen him and were terrified. But at once he spoke with them, "Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!" He got into the boat with them and the wind died down. They were completely astounded. They had not understood the incident of the loaves. On the contrary, their hearts were hardened.

**Meditation:** After the great miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, Jesus sends his disciples away to fend for themselves in the dark of the night while a storm begins to brew on the sea. Although they were experienced fishermen, they were fearful for their lives. The Lord's sudden presence on the sea only made them more fearful! Mark says they were terrified (verse 50), not only because the sea was threatening to drown them. When they saw Jesus walking on the water, they thought he was a ghost waiting for their imminent destruction. Jesus had to calm them with his reassuring voice: "Take heart, it is I; have no fear." Jesus gave them the courage to cast their anxiety and fear on him who is Lord of the seas as well as their lives. Scripture reminds us that no fear can overtake us if we put our trust in God's love and care for us. John the Evangelist tells us that God's love abides in us and perfect love casts out fear. (1 John 4:16,18).

**Prayer:** Grant us, almighty God, that the bringer of your salvation, who for the world's redemption came forth with newness of heavenly light, may dawn afresh in our hearts and bring us constant renewal. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Do you ever find yourself thinking how much we are like the apostles – especially when we experience trials and adversity? While the Lord may at times seem distant to us, he, nonetheless is constantly present at our side. The scriptures remind us that the Lord is "a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). Whatever storms make beset us, he promises to "bring us to our desired haven" (Psalm 107:29-30). The Lord keeps watch over us at all times, and especially in our moments of temptation and difficulty. Do you rely on the Lord for his strength and help? Jesus assures us that we have no need of fear if we trust in Him and in his great love for us. When calamities and trials threaten to overwhelm you, how do you respond? With fear and panic, or with faith and trust in God's love and presence with you?

### **Thursday, January 9 ~ Season of Christmas**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 4:14-22** Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all. He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.* Rolling up the scroll, he

handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

**Meditation:** In Jesus we see the grace of God in action. His gracious words brought hope, joy, and favor to those who were ready to receive him. Where did Jesus begin his public ministry? In his own land of Galilee where he was reared from his youth in Nazareth. His proclamation of the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah brought wonder to his kin and townsfolk. Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would come in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring freedom to those oppressed by sin and evil (see Isaiah 61:1-2). Jesus awakened their hope in the promises of God. They, in turn, received his words favorably and wondered what would become of "Joseph's son". Their hearts were hungry for the word of life and they looked to Jesus with anticipation and wonder. Do you look to Jesus with confidence and hope in the fulfillment of all God's promises?

**Prayer:** O God, who by the Nativity of your Only Begotten Son wondrously began for your people the work of redemption, grant, we pray, to your servants such firmness of faith, that by his guidance they may attain the glorious prize you have promised. 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 did Jesus come to do for us? He came to set us free from the worst tyranny possible – slavery to sin and the fear of death, and the eternal destruction of both body and soul. God's power alone can save us from emptiness and poverty of spirit, from confusion and error, and from hopelessness and the fear of annihilation. The gospel of salvation is "good news" for us today. Do you know the joy and freedom of the gospel? If not, why not?

## Friday, January 10 ~ Season of Christmas

**Holy Gospel: Luke 5:12-16** It happened that there was a man full of leprosy in one of the towns where Jesus was; and when he saw Jesus, he fell prostrate, pleaded with him, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean." Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I will do it. Be made clean." And the leprosy left him immediately. Then he ordered him not to tell anyone, but "Go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them." The report about him spread all the more, and great crowds assembled to listen to him and to be cured of their ailments, but he would withdraw to deserted places to pray.

**Meditation:** Something quite remarkable takes place in today's gospel. The leper approached Jesus confidently and humbly, expecting that Jesus could and would heal him. Normally a leper would be stoned or at least warded off if he tried to come near a rabbi. Jesus not only grants the man his request, but he demonstrates the personal love, compassion, and tenderness of God in his physical touch. The medical knowledge of his day would have regarded such contact as grave risk for incurring infection. Jesus met the man's misery with compassion and tender kindness. He communicated the love and mercy of God in a sign that spoke more eloquently than words. He touched the man and made him clean – not only physically but spiritually as well. The love of God invites us to do as Jesus did – to love the unlovable, to touch the untouchable, and to forgive the unforgivable.

**Prayer:** Cast your kindly light upon your faithful, Lord, we pray, and with the splendor of your glory set their hearts ever aflame, that they may never cease to acknowledge their Savior and may truly hold fast to him. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Jesus did the unthinkable by physically touching the untouchable. Jewish law forbade anyone from touching or approaching a leper, lest ritual defilement occur. Are there people in your life that you might treat as a leper? They may not have leprosy, but the way you see them, the way you look upon them, the way you treat them, the way you avoid them, perhaps they might as well have leprosy. When someone who is begging for food, or for your pocket changes approaches you for help, do you pretend not to see them? People created in the same image and likeness of God just like you? Think about it...then do something about it the next time someone needs a helping hand, a kind word, and to know that the love of Christ – the love in your heart – is pouring forth to help them.

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