

# 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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***“Think well. Speak well. Do well. These three things, through the mercy of God, will make a man go to Heaven.” –SAINT CAMILLUS DE LELLIS***

### Monday, July 15 ~ Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 10:34-11:1** Jesus said to his Apostles: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s enemies will be those of his household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple – amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.” When Jesus finished giving these commands to his Twelve disciples, he went away from that place to teach and to preach in their towns.

**Meditation:** The battle Jesus speaks of is not an earthly conflict between nations, but spiritual warfare between the forces of Satan and the armies of heaven. The scriptures make clear that there are ultimately only two kingdoms – God’s kingdom of truth and light, and Satan’s kingdom of lies, half-truths, deceit and darkness. Satan has only one aim – the complete domination of our hearts, minds, and will for his kingdom. And he will use any means possible to draw us from good to evil, from truth to deception, from light to darkness, and from life to death. There are no neutral parties in this spiritual battle. We are either for or against the kingdom of God – there can be no middle ground, compromise, secular redefinition or “political correctness.” The choices we make and the actions we take in living out our daily lives reveal whose kingdom we choose to follow. Always remember that God sent Jesus to overthrow Satan’s power and to set us free from everything that would keep us from the love of God and his wise rule in our lives – freedom from slavery to sin and our unruly desires, freedom from fear, greed, and selfishness.

**Prayer:** Grant, we pray, almighty God, that, just as we celebrate the heavenly birthday of the Bishop Saint Bonaventure, we may benefit from his great learning and constantly imitate the ardor of his charity. 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:** When Jesus spoke about “division” the Old Testament prophecy of Micah unfolds: “a man’s enemies are the men of his own household” (ref. Micah 7:6). The love of God compels us to choose who will be first, foremost and always in our lives. To place any relationship or anything else above that which has been divinely revealed to us in Sacred Scripture by God and his son, Jesus Christ, becomes a form of idolatry. Jesus challenges his disciples to examine who and what they love first and foremost. A true disciple loves God above all else and is willing to forsake all for Jesus Christ. Jesus insists that his disciples give him the loyalty which is only due to God. It is possible that family, friends, colleagues and neighbors can become our enemies by leading us astray, by embracing a lifestyle that is contrary to the truth and God’s will. Who in your life who leads you away from God? Who distances you from God’s love?

**Saint Bonaventure said it:** “The outcome or the fruit of reading holy scripture is by no means negligible: it is the fullness of eternal happiness. For these are the books which tell us of eternal life, which were written not only that we might believe but also that we might have everlasting life. When we do live that life we shall understand fully, we shall love completely, and our desires will be totally satisfied. Then, with all our needs fulfilled we shall truly know the love that surpasses all understanding and so be filled with the fullness of God. The purpose of scriptures, which comes to us from God, is to lead us to this fullness

according to the truths contained in those sayings of the apostles to which I have referred. In order to achieve this, we must study holy scripture carefully, teach it and listen to it in the same way."

## **Tuesday, July 16 ~ Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time**

### **Our Lady of Mount Carmel**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 12:46-50** While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with him. But he said in reply to the one who told him, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."

**Meditation:** God offers to each of us the greatest of relationships - union of heart, mind, and spirit with himself, Jesus Christ, who is the very author and source of love (1 John 4:8,16). God's love never fails, never forgets, never compromises, never lies, never lets us down nor disappoints us. His love is consistent, unwavering, unconditional, and unstoppable. Nothing can deter him from ever leaving us, ignoring us, or treating us unkindly. He will love us no matter what. It is his nature to love. That is why he created us - to be united with him and to share in his love and unity (1 John 3:1). God is a trinity of persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and a community of love. That is why Jesus challenged his followers and even his own earthly family to recognize that God is the true source of all relationships. God wants all of our relationships to be rooted in his love.

**Prayer:** May the venerable intercession of the glorious Virgin Mary come to our aid, we pray, O Lord, so that, fortified by her protection, we may reach the mountain which is Christ. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** God did not intend for us to be alone, but to be with others. That is why he gives us virtually unlimited opportunities for developing relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Why does Jesus seem to ignore his own relatives when they pressed to see him? His love and respect for his mother and his relatives is unquestionable. Jesus never lost an opportunity to teach his disciples a spiritual lesson and truth about the kingdom of God. On this occasion when many gathered to hear Jesus he pointed to another higher reality of relationships, namely our relationship with God and with those who belong to God.

**About the Memorial to Our Lady of Mount Carmel:** Sacred Scripture celebrated the beauty of Carmel where the prophet Elijah defended the purity of Israel's faith in the living God. In the twelfth century, hermits withdrew to that mountain and later founded the Carmelite order devoted to the contemplative life under the patronage of Mary, the holy Mother of God. Devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel is worldwide, and most Catholics are familiar with the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, also known as the Brown Scapular. Mary appeared to St. Simon Stock on July 16, 1251, and gave him the scapular with the following words, which are preserved in a fourteenth century narrative: "This will be for you and for all Carmelites the privilege, that he who dies in this will not suffer eternal fire." The feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was instituted for the Carmelites in 1332, and extended to the whole Church in 1726.

## **Wednesday, July 17 ~ Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:25-27** At that time Jesus exclaimed: "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him."

**Meditation:** It is a safe presumption that all of us want to know the mind and thoughts of God. Jesus thanks the Father in heaven for revealing to his disciples the wisdom and knowledge of God. What does Jesus' prayer tell us about God and about ourselves? First, it tells us that God is both Father and Lord of earth as well as heaven. He is both Creator and Author of all that he has made, the first origin of everything and transcendent authority, and at the same time, goodness and loving care for all his children. All fatherhood and motherhood is derived from him (ref. Ephesians 3:14-15). Jesus' prayer also contains a warning that pride can keep us from the love and knowledge of God. Pride is Satan's favorite sin, for all sin has its roots in pride.

**Prayer:** O God, who show the light of your truth to those who go astray, so that they may return to the right path, give all who for the faith they profess are accounted Christians the grace to reject whatever is

contrary to the name of Christ and to strive after all that does it honor. 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 makes us ignorant and blind to the things of God? Certainly intellectual pride, coldness of heart, and stubbornness of our human will shut out God and his kingdom. Pride is the root of all vice and the strongest influence propelling us to sin. It first overpowers the human heart, making it cold and indifferent towards God. It also closes the mind to God's truth and wisdom for our lives. What is pride? It is the inordinate love of oneself at the expense of others and the exaggerated estimation of one's own learning and importance. Jesus contrasts intellectual pride with child-like simplicity and humility. The simple of heart are like "babes" in the sense that they see purely without pretense and acknowledge their dependence and trust in the one who is greater, wiser, and more trustworthy. They seek one thing — the "*summum bonum*" or "greatest good" who is God himself. Simplicity of heart is wedded with humility. Humility is the queen of virtues, because humility inclines the heart towards grace and truth. Just as pride is the root of every sin and evil, the grace of humility takes the right attitude before God and allows him as God to do all. Remember that God opposes the proud, and gives grace to the humble (ref. Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6). Only the humble in heart can receive true wisdom and understanding of God and his ways. Do you submit to God's word with simple trust and humility?

### **Thursday, July 18 ~ Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Camillus de Lellis, Priest**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:28-30** Jesus said: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

**Meditation:** What is this "yoke" which Jesus refer to in the gospel? The Jews used the image of a yoke to express submission to God. They spoke of the yoke of the law, the yoke of the commandments, the yoke of the kingdom, the yoke of God. Jesus says his yoke is "easy". The Greek word for "easy" can also mean "well-fitting". Yokes were tailor-made to fit the oxen well. We are commanded to put on the "sweet yoke of Jesus" and to live the "heavenly way of life and happiness". Jesus also says his "burden is light". There's a story of a man who once met a boy carrying a smaller crippled lad on his back. "That's a heavy load you are carrying there," exclaimed the man. "He ain't heavy; he's my brother!" responded the boy. No burden is too heavy when it's given in love and carried in love.

**Prayer:** O God, who adorned the Priest Saint Camillus with a singular grace of charity towards the sick, pour out upon us, by his merits, a spirit of love for you, so that, serving you in our neighbor, we may, at the hour of our death, pass safely over 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:** By embracing the way and the truth and the life of Christ, Jesus offers us the kingdom of righteousness, peace, happiness and joy. This is not a political kingdom, but a spiritual one. The yoke of Christ's kingdom, his kingly rule and way of life, liberates us from the chains of sin, the burden of guilt and from the oppression of sin and hurtful desires. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation the priest – acting in the person of Christ – lifts the burden of sin and the weight of hopelessness from us. Jesus used the analogy of a yoke to explain how we can exchange the burden of sin and despair for a weight of glory and victory from sin. The yoke which Jesus invites us to embrace is his way of grace and freedom from the power and the weight of sin. Do you want to begin with a fresh start in life – a life of Christ? Get to confession, you're your sins absolved by the priest, then start anew by trusting in God's love and by submitting to his will and his plan for your life.

**About Saint Camillus de Lellis:** Saint Camillus' mother was nearly sixty years old when he was born (1550). As a youth he gave himself to the sinful pleasures of this world. His conversion dates from the feast of the Purification, 1575. Two attempts to enter the Capuchin Order were frustrated by an incurable sore on his leg. In Rome St. Camillus was received in a hospital for incurables; before long he was put in charge because of his ability and zeal for virtue. He brought to the sick every imaginable kind of spiritual and bodily aid. At the age of thirty-two he began studying for Holy Orders and was not ashamed of being numbered with children. After ordination to the holy priesthood he founded a congregation of Regular Clerics, the "Ministers to the Sick." As a fourth vow the community assumed the duty of caring for the plague-ridden at the risk of their lives. With invincible patience Camillus persevered day and night in the service of the sick, performing the meanest of duties. His love shone forth most brightly when the city of Rome was stricken by epidemic and famine, and when the plague raged at Nola. Having suffered five different maladies, which he called God's mercy, he died in Rome at the age of sixty-five. On his lips was

the prayer for the dying: "May the face of Christ Jesus shine gloriously upon you." Leo XIII declared him the heavenly patron of hospitals and added his name in the litany for the dying.

## Friday, July 19 ~ Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 12:1-8** Jesus was going through a field of grain on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "See, your disciples are doing what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry, how he went into the house of God and ate the bread of offering, which neither he nor his companions but only the priests could lawfully eat? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests serving in the temple violate the Sabbath and are innocent? I say to you, something greater than the temple is here. If you knew what this meant, *I desire mercy, not sacrifice*, you would not have condemned these innocent men. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

**Meditation:** What does the commandment "keep holy the Sabbath" require of us? What is the primary intention behind this command? The religious leaders of the time confronted Jesus on this issue. The "Sabbath rest" was meant to be a time to remember and celebrate God's goodness and the goodness of his work, both in creation and redemption. It was a day set apart for the praise of God, his work of creation, and his saving actions on our behalf. It was intended to bring everyday work to a halt and to provide needed rest and refreshment. Jesus' disciples are scolded by the scribes and Pharisees, not for plucking and eating corn from the fields, but for doing so on the Sabbath. In defending his disciples, Jesus argues from the scriptures that human need has precedence over ritual custom. In their hunger, David and his men ate of the holy bread offered in the Temple. Jesus also quoted of the Sabbath work involved in worship in the Temple. This kind of work was usually double the work of worship on weekdays. Jesus then quotes from the prophet Hosea (6:6): *I desire mercy, and not sacrifice*. While the claims of ritual sacrifice are important to God, mercy and kindness in response to human need are even more important.

**Prayer:** O God, who show the light of your truth to those who go astray, so that they may return to the right path, give all who for the faith they profess are accounted Christians the grace to reject whatever is contrary to the name of Christ and to strive after all that does it honor. 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 a difference Sunday makes when it truly is a day of rest, a day to stop our labors and other unnecessary "busy-ness." For centuries, Christian citizens have sought recognition in their respective nations of Sunday as a legal holiday, a day of rest from labor. This has been done, in part, by a concern for the rights of workers and their need for leisure. The Church lifts up the value of human work, seeing in it an imitation of God in His work of creation. At the same time, she insists on the need and the right to rest and on the right to have time for family and for worship. In our present age, a new social phenomenon has emerged: the weekend, which has altered the very character of Sunday. The weekend's impact on society has not been bad in all aspects, for it has brought opportunities for cultural and social events that, to some extent, can meet our human need for rest. But all too often our Sunday gets lost in the weekend. It gets left out of the planned activities or gets tucked in almost as an afterthought. In regard to this problem, Pope John Paul II once wrote: "Unfortunately, when Sunday loses its fundamental meaning and becomes merely part of a 'weekend,' it can happen that people stay locked within a horizon so limited that they can no longer see 'the heavens.' Hence, though ready to celebrate, they are really incapable of doing so." When Sunday is forgotten, and we are left only with a weekend, events become strictly entertaining or just an extension of work. How do you spend your Sundays? Is it a day of worship and thanksgiving to God by first attending Mass? A day of rest? Or just another day of the week?

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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