

# 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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***“I have been all things unholy.  
If God can work through me, He can work through anyone.”***

~SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

**Monday, September 30 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time  
Saint Jerome, Priest and Doctor of the Church**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 9:46-50** An argument arose among the disciples about which of them was the greatest. Jesus realized the intention of their hearts and took a child and placed it by his side and said to them, “Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. For the one who is least among all of you is the one who is the greatest.” Then John said in reply, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow in our company.” Jesus said to him, “Do not prevent him, for whoever is not against you is for you.”

**Meditation:** It is somewhat surprising to see that even the disciples of Jesus argued about who is the greatest among them. And yet, as they are human, we see the appetite for glory and greatness seems to be inbred in all humans – even among the disciples! On one hand, who doesn't cherish the ambition to be “somebody” whom others admire rather than a “nobody”? Even the psalms speak about the glory God has destined for us. “You have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor” (Psalm 8:5). Jesus made a dramatic gesture by placing a child next to himself to show his disciples who really is the greatest in the kingdom of God. What can a little child possibly teach us about greatness? Children in the ancient world had no rights, position, or privileges of their own. They were socially at the “bottom of the rung” and at the service of their parents, much like the household staff and domestic servants. What is the significance of Jesus' gesture? Jesus elevated a little child in the presence of his disciples by placing the child in a privileged position of honor at his right side. It is customary, even today, to seat the guest of honor at the right side of the host. Who is the greatest in God's kingdom? The one who is humble and lowly of heart — who instead of asserting their rights willingly empty themselves of pride and self-seeking glory by taking the lowly position of a servant or child. Knowing this, do you still seek glory, fame and greatness among your human peers?

**Prayer:** O God, who gave the Priest Saint Jerome a living and tender love for Sacred Scripture, grant that your people may be ever more fruitfully nourished by your Word and find in it the fount of life. 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:** We tend to search around looking for people to model our lives after, when Jesus, himself, is our model. He came not to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28). Paul the Apostles states that Jesus “emptied himself and took the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7). Jesus lowered himself (he whose place is at the right hand of God the Father) and took on our lowly nature that he might raise us up and clothe us in his divine nature. “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). If we want to be filled with God's life and power, then we need to empty ourselves of everything which stands in the way — pride, envy, self-seeking glory, vanity, and possessiveness. God wants empty vessels so he can fill them with his own glory, power, and love (2 Cor. 4:7). Are you ready to humble yourself and to serve as Jesus did?

**About Saint Jerome:** One of the greatest Biblical scholars of Christendom, Saint Jerome was born of Christian parents at Stridon in Dalmatia around the year 345. Educated at the local school, he then studied rhetoric in Rome for eight years, before returning to Aquileia to set up a community of ascetics. When that community broke up after three years Jerome went to the east. He met an old hermit named

Malchus, who inspired the saint to live in a bare cell, dressed in sackcloth, studying the Scriptures. He learned Hebrew from a rabbi. Then he returned to Antioch and was reluctantly ordained priest. With his bishop he visited Constantinople and became friendly with Saints Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa. And then in 382 he went again to Rome, to become the personal secretary of Pope Damasus. Here he met his dearest friends, a wealthy woman called Paula, her daughter Eustochium and another wealthy woman named Marcella. Here too he began his finest work. Commissioned by the pope, he began to revise the Latin version of the psalms and the New Testament, with immense care and scholarship. Jerome eventually translated the whole of the Bible into the Latin version which is known as the Vulgate. But when Damasus died, his enemies forced the saint to leave Rome. Accompanied by Paula and Eustochium, Jerome went to Bethlehem. There he lived for thirty-four years till his death in 420, building a monastery over which he presided and a convent headed first by Paula and after her death by Eustochium. The saint set up a hospice for the countless pilgrims to that place. His scholarship, his polemics, his treatises and letters often provoked anger and always stimulated those who read them. 'Plato located the soul of man in the head,' he wrote, 'Christ located it in the heart.'

## **Tuesday, October 1 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time** **Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus, Virgin**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 9:51-56** When the days for Jesus to be taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, and he sent messengers ahead of him. On the way they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they journeyed to another village.

**Meditation:** Are you surprised to see two of Jesus' disciples praying for the destruction of a Samaritan village? The Jews and Samaritans had been divided for centuries. Jewish pilgrims who passed through Samaritan territory were often assaulted. Jesus did the unthinkable for a Jew. He not only decided to travel through Samaritan territory at personal risk, but he also asked for hospitality in one of their villages! Jesus' offer of friendship was rebuffed. Is there any wonder that the disciples were indignant and felt justified in wanting to see retribution done to this village? Wouldn't you respond the same way? Jesus, however, rebukes his disciples for their lack of toleration. Jesus had "set his face toward Jerusalem" to die on a cross that all might be reconciled with God and be united as one people in Christ.

**Prayer:** O God, who open your Kingdom to those who are humble and to little ones, lead us to follow trustingly in the little way of Saint Therese, so that through her intercession we may see your eternal glory revealed. 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:** Tolerance is a much needed virtue today. But aren't we often tolerant for the wrong thing or for the wrong motive? Christian love seeks the highest good of both one's neighbor and one's enemy. Take for example Abraham Lincoln, who as president was criticized for his courtesy and tolerance towards his enemies during the American Civil War. President Lincoln's response? He said: "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?" Which begs the question: How do you treat those who cross you and cause you trouble? Do you seek their good rather than their harm?

**About Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus – the "Little Flower"** - Marie Thérèse Martin was born at Alençon, France on January 2, 1873, the youngest of five daughters. Her father, Louis, was a watchmaker, and her mother, Zélie, who died of breast cancer when Thérèse was four, was a lace maker. She was brought up in a model Christian home. While still a child she felt the attraction of the cloister, and at fifteen obtained permission to enter the Carmel of Lisieux. For the next nine years she lived a very ordinary religious life. There are no miracles, exploits or austerities recorded of her. She attained a very high degree of holiness by carrying out her ordinary daily duties with perfect fidelity, having a childlike confidence in God's providence and merciful love and being ready to be at the service of others at all times. She also had a great love of the Church and a zeal for the conversion of souls. She prayed especially for priests. She died of consumption on September 30, 1897, at the age of 24, and was canonized in 1925. She has never ceased to fulfill her promise: "I will pass my heaven in doing good on earth." Her interior life is known through her autobiography called *Story of a Soul*. Pope John Paul II declared her a Doctor of the Church in 1997.

## Wednesday, October 2 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time Feast of the Guardian Angels

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 18:1-5,10** The disciples approached Jesus and said, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me. "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father."

**Meditation:** Jesus warned his disciples to "not despise the little ones." God dwells with the lowly and regards them with compassion. His angels watch over them as guardians. God has not left us alone in our struggle "to refuse evil and to choose good" (ref. Isaiah 7:15). The angels are God's "ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation" (ref. Heb. 1:14).

**Prayer:** O God, who in your unfathomable providence are pleased to send your holy Angels to guard us, hear our supplication as we cry to you, that we may always be defended by their protection and rejoice eternally in their company. 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:** Saint Basil the Great once said, "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life." Angels ministered to Jesus after his temptation in the wilderness and during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. The angels will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgment (ref. Matt. 25:31). The angels tell us that this universe is not just materialistic. The fallen angels, led by Satan, seek our destruction. If they cannot induce us to disown our faith and allegiance to Christ, they attempt to divert us from doing the will of God by distracting us with good things that weigh us down and make us indifferent towards the things of God. God gives us the help of his angelic hosts and he gives us spiritual weapons, the shield of faith and the breastplate of righteousness (ref. Ephesians 6:1-11), to resist the devil and his lies. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we, too, join with angelic choirs in singing the praises of God. Do you pause several times a day to give thanks to the Lord for his daily guidance and protection?

**About this Feast:** Angels are servants and messengers from God. "Angel" in Greek means "messenger." In unseen ways the angels help us on our earthly pilgrimage by assisting us in work and study, helping us in temptation and protecting us from physical danger. The idea that each soul has assigned to it a personal guardian angel has been long accepted by the Church and is a truth of our faith. From the Gospel of today's liturgy we read: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father" (Matthew 18:10). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that "the existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls 'angels' is a truth of faith (328)." From our birth until our death, man is surrounded by the protection and intercession of angels, particularly our guardian angel: "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life (336)." The Church thanks God for our helpers, the angels, particularly on this feast day and September 29 which is the feast of Saint Michael, Saint Gabriel, and Saint Raphael, archangels. Today's feast appeared in Spain during the sixteenth century. It was extended to the universal Church and made obligatory in 1670.

## Thursday, October 3 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

**Holy Gospel: Luke 10:1-12** Jesus appointed seventy-two other disciples whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.' Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, 'The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you.' Yet know this: the Kingdom of God is at hand. I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town."

**Meditation:** In Jesus' time seventy was held to be the number of nations throughout the world. Jesus commissioned the seventy to a two-fold task: to speak in his name and to act with his power. Jesus gave

them instructions for how they were to carry out their ministry. They must go and serve as people without guile, full of charity and peace, and simplicity. They must give their full attention to the proclamation of God's kingdom and not be diverted by other lesser things. They must travel light -- only take what was essential and leave behind whatever would distract them — in order to concentrate on the task of speaking the word of the God. They must do their work, not for what they can get out of it, but for what they can give freely to others, without expecting reward or payment. "Poverty of spirit" frees us from greed and preoccupation with possessions and makes ample room for God's provision. The Lord wants his disciples to be dependent on him and not on themselves.

**Prayer:** O God, who manifest your almighty power above all by pardoning and showing mercy, bestow, we pray, your grace abundantly upon us and make those hastening to attain your promises heirs to the treasures of heaven. 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 kind of harvest do you think the Lord expects today? When Jesus commissioned seventy of his disciples to go on mission, he gave them a vision of a great harvest for the kingdom of God. Jesus frequently used the image of a harvest to convey the coming of God's reign on earth. The harvest is the fruition of labor and growth — beginning with the sowing of seeds, then growth, and finally fruit for the harvest. In like manner, the word of God is sown in the hearts of receptive men and women who hear his word and who accept it with trust and obedience. The harvest Jesus had in mind was not only the people of Israel, but all the peoples (or nations) of the world. John the Evangelist tells us that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (ref. John 3:16).

## **Friday, October 4 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Francis of Assisi**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 10:13-16** Jesus said to them, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And as for you, Capernaum, 'Will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to the netherworld.' Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

**Meditation:** Why was Jesus upset with these communities? The word woe is also translated as alas. It is as much as an expression of sorrowful pity as it is of anger. Why does Jesus lament and issue a stern warning? The people who heard the gospel here very likely responded with indifference. Jesus upbraids them for doing nothing! Repentance demands change – a change of heart and way of life. God's word is life-giving and it saves us from destruction – the destruction of soul as well as body. Jesus' anger is directed toward sin and everything which hinders us from doing the will of God and receiving his blessing. In love he calls us to walk in his way of truth and freedom, grace and mercy, justice and holiness.

**Prayer:** O God, by whose gift Saint Francis was conformed to Christ in poverty and humility, grant that, by walking in Francis' footsteps, we may follow your Son, and, through joyful charity, come to be united with 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:** If Jesus were to visit your neighborhood community and walk the streets of our town today, what would he say? Would he issue a warning like the one he gave to Chorazin and Bethsaida? And how would you respond? Wherever Jesus went he did mighty works to show the people how much God had done for them. Chorazin and Bethsaida had been blessed with the visitation of God. They heard the good news and experienced the wonderful works which Jesus did for them.

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