

# 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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***“As we begin this new year, let us ask ourselves: Do I know how to see with the heart? Do I know how to look at people with the heart? Do I take to heart the people with whom I live? Or do I tear them down by gossip? And above all, do I put the Lord at the center of my heart, or other values, other interests, like advancement, riches, power? Only if we take life to heart will we know how to take care and overcome the indifference all around. So let us ask for the grace to live this year with the desire to take others to heart and to care for them. ~POPE FRANCIS, HOMILY EXCERPT, JANUARY 1, 2020***

### **Monday, January 13 ~ First Week in Ordinary Time Saint Hilary of Poitiers, Bishop and Doctor of the Church**

**Holy Gospel: Mark 1:14-20** After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God: “This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel.” As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Then they left their nets and followed him. He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets. Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.

**Meditation:** The good news of Jesus Christ is quite simple: peace (restoration of relationship with God), hope (the hope of resurrection and heaven), truth (God's word is true and reliable), promise (he rewards those who seek him), immortality (God gives everlasting life), and the good news of salvation (liberty from sin and freedom to live as sons and daughters of God). In announcing the good news, Jesus made two simple demands: repent and believe. Repentance requires a life change, a change of mind, sorrow for sin and its consequences, a hatred of sin and a firm resolution to avoid it in the future. The Lord gives us grace to see sin for what it really is -- a rejection of his love and wisdom and a refusal to do what is good and in accord with his will. His grace brings pardon and help for turning away from everything that would keep us from his love. To believe is to take Jesus at his word and to recognize that God loved us so much that he sent his only begotten Son to free us from bondage to fear and sin. God made the supreme sacrifice of his Son on the cross; he invites us in love to surrender our lives to him.

**Prayer:** Grant, we pray, almighty God, that we may rightly understand and truthfully profess the divinity of your Son, which the Bishop Saint Hilary taught with such constancy. 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 preached the truths of the gospel he called others to follow as his disciples and he gave them a mission – “to catch people for the kingdom of God.” What kind of disciples did he choose? Regular, ordinary people, day-to-day people – in this particular case, fishermen. In the choice of the first apostles we see a characteristic feature of Jesus' work: he chose very ordinary people, non-professionals, who had no wealth or position. They were chosen from the common people who did ordinary things, had no special 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 serve, we must not think we have nothing to offer. The Lord takes what ordinary people, like us, can offer and uses it for greatness in his kingdom. Do you let God work through you and in you for his glory?

### **Tuesday, January 14 ~ First Week in Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Mark 1:21-28** Jesus came to Capernaum with his followers, and on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one

having authority and not as the scribes. In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!" The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him. All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

**Meditation:** Ask yourself a couple of very simple questions: Do you believe that God's word has power to change and transform your life? And are you eager to hear and believe the word of God? When Jesus taught he spoke with authority. He spoke the word of God as no one had spoken it before. When the Rabbis taught they supported their statements with quotes from other authorities. The prophets spoke with delegated authority – "Thus says the Lord." When Jesus spoke he needed no authorities to back his statements. He was authority incarnate – the Word of God made flesh. When he spoke, God spoke. When he commanded even the demons obeyed. Do you respond to God's commands as God wants you to?

**Prayer:** Attend to the pleas of your people with heavenly care, O Lord, we pray, that they may see what must be done and gain strength to do what they have seen. 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 Augustine once remarked that the "devils confessed Christ, but lacking charity it availed nothing...They confessed a sort of faith, but without love. Hence they were devils." We must always remember that faith is mighty, but without love faith profits nothing (ref. 1 Corinthians 13). True faith works through love (ref. Galatians 5:6) and abounds in hope (ref. Romans 15:13). That is why faith is both a free gift of God and the free assent of our will to the whole truth that God has revealed. To live, grow, and persevere in the faith to the end, we must nourish it with the word of God. The Lord gives us his Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds that we may grow in his truth and in the knowledge of his great love for each of us. If we approach God's word submissively, with an eagerness to do everything the Lord desires, we are in a much better position to learn what God wants to teach us through his word. Are you eager to be taught by the Lord and, once taught by Christ, to conform your minds and hearts and your very life according to the Word of the Lord?

### **Wednesday, January 15 ~ First Week in Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Mark 1:29-39** On leaving the synagogue Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her. He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them. When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. The whole town was gathered at the door. He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him. Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and those who were with him pursued him and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you." He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come." So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

**Meditation:** We all have challenges, but how we deal with them is important. Who do you take your troubles to? A self-help book? An advice columnist? A TV talk show host? What about Christ? Jesus' disciples freely brought their troubles to him because they found him ready and able to deal with any difficulty, affliction, or sickness which they encountered. When Simon brought Jesus to his home, his mother-in-law was instantly healed because Jesus heard Simon's prayer. Saint Jerome reflects on this passage: "Can you imagine Jesus standing before your bed and you continue sleeping? It is absurd that you would remain in bed in his presence. Where is Jesus? He is already here offering himself to us. 'In the middle,' he says, 'among you he stands, whom you do not recognize' (ref. John 1:26) 'The kingdom of God is in your midst' (ref. Mark 1:15). Faith beholds Jesus among us. If we are unable to seize his hand, let us prostrate ourselves at his feet. If we are unable to reach his head, let us wash his feet with our tears. Our repentance is the perfume of the Savior. See how costly is the compassion of the Savior."

**Prayer:** Attend to the pleas of your people with heavenly care, O Lord, we pray, that they may see what must be done and gain strength to do what they have seen. 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:** Do you allow Jesus to be first in your life? Do you make the Lord and healer number one in your personal life, family, and community, especially in times of trial, challenge, fears and anxiety? Learn to approach Christ with expectant faith. God's healing power restores us not only to health but to

active service and care of others. There is no trouble he does not want to help us with and there is no bondage he can't set us free from.

## Thursday, January 16 ~ First Week in Ordinary Time

**Holy Gospel: Mark 1:40-45** A leper came to him and kneeling down begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched the leper, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean." The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. Then, warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once. Then he said to him, "See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them." The man went away and began to publicize the whole matter. He spread the report abroad so that it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly. He remained outside in deserted places, and people kept coming to him from everywhere.

**Meditation:** No one who sought Jesus out is refused his help. Even the untouchables and the outcasts of Jewish society found help in him. Unlike the people of Jesus' time who fled at the sight of a leper, Jesus touched the leper who approached him and he made him whole and clean. Why was this so remarkable? Lepers were outcasts of society. Their physical condition was terrible as they slowly lost their limbs and withered away. They were not only shunned but regarded as "already dead" even by their relatives.

**Prayer:** Attend to the pleas of your people with heavenly care, O Lord, we pray, that they may see what must be done and gain strength to do what they have seen. 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:** Jewish law forbade anyone from touching or approaching a leper; ritual defilement occurred when contact was made. This leper did something quite remarkable. He 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. St. Francis of Assisi once said: "Preach the Gospel at all times – if necessary, use words." In other words, our Christ-directed actions speak louder than words in helping others at all times. Talk can be cheap. Do your actions speak louder than your words about how you live your life as a proclaimed disciple of Christ?

## Friday, January 17 ~ First Week in Ordinary Time Saint Anthony, Abbot

**Holy Gospel: Mark 2:1-12** When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to him, "Child, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?" Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth" –he said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home." He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

**Meditation:** Jesus' treatment of sinners upset the religious teachers of the day. When a cripple was brought to Jesus because of the faith of his friends, Jesus did the unthinkable. He first forgave the man his sins. The scribes regarded this as blasphemy because they understood that only God had authority to forgive sins and to unbind a man or woman from their burden of guilt. Jesus claimed an authority which only God could rightfully give. Jesus not only proved that his authority came from God, he showed the great power of God's redeeming love and mercy by healing the cripple of his physical ailment. This man had been crippled not only physically, but spiritually as well. Jesus freed him from his burden of guilt and restored his body as well.

**Prayer:** O God, who brought the Abbot Saint Anthony to serve you by a wondrous way of life in the desert, grant, through his intercession, that, denying ourselves, we may always love you above all things. 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:** Have you ever experienced the great healing power associated with forgiveness? Remember what we pray for each time we pray the "Lord's Prayer" – "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Before we can fully experience God's love and mercy in forgiving us, we must first extend that same level of love and mercy to those who seek our forgiveness. If we don't we risk placing walls between us and the love and mercy of Christ. The Lord is every ready to bring us healing of body, mind and soul. Do you allow anything to keep you from experiencing the love and mercy and forgiveness of Jesus Christ?



**In the Year 2020  
the Universal Church celebrates the  
150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of  
*QUAMQUAM PLURIES*  
ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII  
ON DEVOTION TO SAINT JOSEPH  
AND DECLARING SAINT JOSEPH  
PATRON OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH**

**READ THE DOCUMENT:**

[http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15081889\\_quamquam-pluries.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15081889_quamquam-pluries.html)

The Catholic Church as always fostered a tender to St. Joseph as the Head of the Holy Family; yet he has become increasingly prominent in the spiritual life of the Church over the last 150 years, as Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC, lists in his new book, *Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of our Spiritual Father:*

- 1870 – Blessed Pope Pius IX declares St. Joseph the "Universal Patron of the Church."
- 1879 – Apparitions at Knock, Ireland. St. Joseph appears with the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Apostle, and Jesus (appearing as the Lamb of God).
- 1889 – Pope Leo XIII writes *Quamquam Pluries*, an encyclical letter on St. Joseph.
- 1908 – St. Luigi Guanella begins constructing a church dedicated to St. Joseph in Rome. It is completed and consecrated as a basilica in 1912.
- 1917 – Apparitions at Fatima, Portugal. During the last apparition on October 13, St. Joseph appears holding the Child Jesus and blessing the world.
- 1921 – Pope Benedict XV inserts the phrase "Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse" into the Divine Praises.
- 1955 – Venerable Pope Pius XII establishes the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker, to be celebrated on May 1.
- 1962 – Pope St. John XXIII inserts St. Joseph's name into the Canon of the Mass
- 1989 – Pope St. John Paul II writes *Redemptoris Custos*, an encyclical letter on St. Joseph.
- 2013 – Pope Francis, echoing and fulfilling the intentions of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, inserts the name of St. Joseph into all Eucharistic Prayers. He also consecrates Vatican City State to St. Joseph.

Through this providential sequence of events, it's clear that the Holy Spirit is at work teaching us the importance of devotion to St. Joseph at this moment in salvation history. "Now is the time of St. Joseph!" writes Father Calloway, "In our day, Jesus wants the Church to know, love, honor, and seek refuge in the spiritual fatherhood of St. Joseph."

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.