

# 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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***“What does it avail in the end to be loved, honored, and praised by man? Does it bring true happiness? Why do you not think more earnestly on your salvation? Will you defer it to future years? Who knows whether you will live so long that you can make up for what you now neglect? Human life is short and uncertain. Is it not better, without delay, to begin what we ought to do?”*** ~SAINT PETER DAMIAN

### **Monday, February 17 ~ Sixth Week in Ordinary Time Seven Founders of the Order of Servites**

**Holy Gospel: Mark 8:11-13** The Pharisees came forward and began to argue with Jesus, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. He sighed from the depth of his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Amen, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." Then he left them, got into the boat again, and went off to the other shore.

**Meditation:** The people of Jesus' time expected that the coming of the Messiah would be accompanied by extraordinary signs and wonders. The religious leaders tested Jesus to see if he had a genuine sign from heaven to back his Messianic claims. False messiahs in the past had made extraordinary claims to attract their followers, such as claiming that they could cleave the Jordan River in two or cause the walls of Jerusalem to fall. Jesus knew the hearts of those who came to test him. They were more interested in seeing signs and supernatural phenomena than they were in hearing the word of God. Simeon had prophesied at Jesus' birth that he was "destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that inner thoughts of many will be revealed" (ref. Luke 2:34-35). Jesus gave them no sign except himself and the ultimate proof of his divinity when he rose from the dead.

**Prayer:** Impart to us, O Lord, in kindness the filial devotion with which the holy brothers venerated so devoutly the Mother of God and led your people to yourself. 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:** Never forget that the Lord reveals himself and makes his presence known to us in many ways – in his word and in the "breaking of the bread" in the Eucharist, in his church – the body of Christ, in his creation, and even in the everyday circumstances of our lives. If we seek the Lord, we will surely find him. And we can be confident that he will give us whatever we need to understand and carry out his will. Most of all, the Lord assures us of his daily presence and the promise that he will never leave us. Saint Theresa of Avila's prayer book contained a bookmark in which she wrote: "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; All things pass: God never changes. Patience achieves all it strives for. Whoever has God lacks nothing, God alone suffices." Think about that for a moment, then ask yourself: Is God enough for you?

### **Tuesday, February 18 ~ Sixth Week in Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Mark 8:14-21** The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. Jesus enjoined them, "Watch out, guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." They concluded among themselves that it was because they had no bread. When he became aware of this he said to them, "Why do you conclude that it is because you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or comprehend? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes and not see, ears and not hear? And do you not remember, when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many wicker baskets full of fragments you picked up?" They answered him, "Twelve." "When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many full baskets of fragments did you pick up?" They answered him, "Seven." He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

**Meditation:** The apostles set off in their boat across the Sea of Galilee only to discover that they forgot to bring enough food for their journey. What were they to do miles away from land and any place where they could buy food and supplies? They were anxious of course, and this was right after Jesus had performed the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes where the disciples fed more than four thousand people (ref. Mark 8:1-9). Jesus knew the trouble in his disciples' hearts even before they could speak. Jesus dealt with their anxiety by first warning them to not fear what can harm the body rather than what can destroy the very heart and soul of their being.

**Prayer:** O God, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling 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:** One might wonder why Jesus told his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod? To the Jewish person leaven was a sign of evil. It was a piece of dough left-over from a previous baking. In due course it fermented and this fermented dough became leaven. Fermentation was associated with decomposing rot. Jesus warned his disciples to avoid the evil influence of the Pharisees and of Herod who sought their own counsels rather than the will of God. As the apostles continued to worry about their lack of bread, Jesus reminded them of his miraculous provision of bread in the feeding of the four thousand. He then upbraided them for their lack of trust in God. "Do you still not understand?" It's easy to get preoccupied with the problems and needs of the present moment and to forget the most important reality of all – God's abiding presence with us and his abundant provision for our lives as well. Thus when you pray, do you pray with joyful confidence, "Father, give us this day our daily bread?"

### **Wednesday, February 19 ~ Sixth Week in Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Mark 8:22-26** When Jesus and his disciples arrived at Bethsaida, people brought to him a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. Putting spittle on his eyes he laid his hands on the man and asked, "Do you see anything?" Looking up the man replied, "I see people looking like trees and walking." Then he laid hands on the man's eyes a second time and he saw clearly; his sight was restored and he could see everything distinctly. Then he sent him home and said, "Do not even go into the village."

**Meditation:** There is one thing worse than physical blindness – and that is blindness of the heart and soul. A blind man is led to Jesus by some of his friends. Without their help he could not have found the one who could restore his sight. Jesus understood the fears and hopes of this blind man who begged him to touch him. The blind in a special way perceive the power of touch. Jesus shows considerateness in bringing this man to a place away from the skeptics and gawkers. His sight is restored in stages as he responds to Jesus' healing touch. Mark records this remarkable miracle in three short phrases: He looked intently and was restored, and saw everything clearly. Jesus sent him home with a warning to avoid the company of those who live in spiritual darkness.

**Prayer:** O God, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling 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:** Might there be a blind spot or two in your life that clouds or blocks your vision of God and his kingdom? If so, you need to work on those blind spots on by one and allow the Lord to touch you with his grace and power that you may walk in the light of his redeeming truth and love. Saint Jerome wrote about the spiritual significance of this healing for us, which we would all do well to think about: "Christ laid his hands upon his eyes that he might see all things clearly, so through visible things he might understand things invisible, which the eye has not seen, that after the film of sin is removed, he might clearly behold the state of his soul with the eye of a clean heart."

### **Thursday, February 20 ~ Sixth Week in Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Mark 8:27-33** Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Christ." Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him. He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke this openly. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

**Meditation:** At an opportune time Jesus tests his disciples with a simple, yet crucial question: Who do men say that I am and who do you say that I am? He was widely recognized in Israel as a mighty man of God, even being compared with the greatest of the prophets, John the Baptist, Elijah, and Jeremiah. Peter, always quick to respond, professes that Jesus is truly the Christ. No mortal being could have revealed this to Peter; but only God. Through faith Peter grasped who Jesus truly was. He was the first apostle to recognize Jesus as the Anointed One (Messiah and Christ). Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew word Messiah, which means Anointed One. Peter's faith, however was sorely tested when Jesus explained that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and die in order that God's work of redemption may be accomplished. How startled the disciples were when they heard these words! How different are God's thoughts and ways from our thoughts and ways! Through humiliation, suffering, and death on the cross Jesus broke the powers of sin and death and won for us our salvation.

**Prayer:** O God, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling 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:** The same question that Jesus posed to his disciples he asks each of us: "Who do **YOU** say that I am?" Who is Jesus for **YOU**? This is a simple, yet crucial question for each one of us, and our response has implications not only on how we live our earthly lives, but our opportunity to have a seat for all eternity at the heavenly banquet. In a time where many don't think about the consequences of their actions, and where many don't want to take responsibility for their actions, we need to take a step or two back and think about how each of us will answer this question – "Who do **YOU** say that I am?" Let's make certain that our response is not simply lip service, as actions speak louder than words. As St. James reminds us: "Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves" (James 1:27). In other words, do not let Christ's teachings go in one ear and out the other. Let his word take root in your mind and your heart, put Christ's teachings into action in your daily lives. In doing so, your response to who Jesus is for you become clear by your every thought, work, and most importantly your actions. Remember, talk is cheap – actions speak louder than words.

## **Friday, February 21 ~ Sixth Week in Ordinary Time** **Saint Peter Damian, Bishop and Doctor of the Church; Church Reformer**

**Holy Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1** Jesus summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? What could one give in exchange for his life? Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this faithless and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." He also said to them, "Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the Kingdom of God has come in power.

**Meditation:** Jesus poses some probing questions to challenge our assumptions about what is most profitable and worthwhile. In every decision of life we are making ourselves a certain kind of person. The kind of person we are, our character, determines to a large extent the kind of future we will face and live. It is possible that some can gain all the things they set their heart on, only to wake up suddenly and discover that they missed the most important things of all. Of what value are material things if they don't help you gain what truly lasts in eternity. Neither money nor possessions can buy heaven, mend a broken heart, or cheer a lonely person. Jesus asks the question: What will a person give in exchange for his life? Everything we have is an out-right gift from God. We owe him everything, including our very lives.

**Prayer:** Grant, we pray, almighty God, that we may so follow the teaching and example of the Bishop Saint Peter Damian, that, putting nothing before Christ and always ardent in the service of your Church, we may be led to the joys of eternal light. 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:** It is possible to give God our money, but not ourselves. It is possible to give him lip service, but not our hearts. A true disciple gladly gives up all that he or she has in exchange for an unending life of joy and happiness with God. God gives without measure. The joy he offers no sadness or loss can diminish. The cross of Christ leads to victory and freedom from sin and death. What is the cross which Jesus Christ commands me to take up each day? When my will crosses with his will, then his will must be done. Are you ready to *lose all* for Jesus Christ in order to *gain all* with Jesus Christ?

**Saturday, February 22 ~ Sixth Week in Ordinary Time**  
**Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew: 13:16-19** When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

**Meditation:** Jesus tests his disciples with a basic, yet crucial question: "Who do men say that I am" followed by "who do you say that I am?" Jesus was widely recognized in Israel as a mighty man of God, even being compared with the greatest of the prophets -- John the Baptist, Elijah, and Jeremiah. Peter, always quick to respond, exclaimed that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. No mortal being could have revealed this to Peter; but only God. Jesus then confers on Peter authority to govern the church that Jesus would build, a church that no powers would overcome. Jesus plays on Peter's name which is the same word for "rock" in both Aramaic and Greek. To call someone a "rock" is one of the greatest of compliments. The ancient rabbis had a saying that when God saw Abraham, he exclaimed: "I have discovered a rock to found the world upon". Through Abraham God established a nation for himself. Through faith Peter grasped who Jesus truly was. He was the first apostle to recognize Jesus as the Anointed One (Messiah and Christ) and the only begotten Son of God. The Lord Jesus tests each of us personally with the same question: "Who do you say that I am?"

**Prayer:** All-powerful Father, You have built Your Church on the rock of Saint Peter's confession of faith. May nothing divide or weaken our unity in faith and love. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Jesus Christ also asked each one of us: "Who do you say that I am?" Obviously your personal response has great ramifications. A wonderful response to come not only from your lips, but from deep from within your heart would be: "Lord Jesus, I profess and believe that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You are my Lord and my Savior. Make my faith strong and help me to live in the victory of the cross by rejecting sin and by accepting your will." Your response to Jesus' question requires sincere thought and discernment. But more importantly it requires action in how we think, speak, and live out our daily lives. Does your life reflect that of a disciple of Christ? If not, why not?

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops;  
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information about saints, solemnities, feasts and memorials courtesy of Catholic Culture.

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**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

*"In the course of that pilgrimage of faith which was his life, Joseph, like Mary, remained faithful to God's call until the end. While Mary's life was the bringing to fullness of that fiat first spoken at the Annunciation, at the moment of Joseph's own 'annunciation' he said nothing; instead he simply 'did as the angel of the Lord commanded him' (Mt 1:24). And this first 'doing' became the beginning of 'Joseph's way.' The Gospels do not record any word ever spoken by Joseph along that way. But the silence of Joseph has its own special eloquence, for thanks to that silence we can understand the truth of the Gospel's judgment that he was 'a just man' (Mt 1:19). One must come to understand this truth, for it contains one of the most important testimonies concerning man and his vocation." (No.17)*

EXCERPT OF POPE JOHN PAUL II'S ENCYCLICAL *REDEMPTORIS CUSTOS* (GUARDIAN OF THE REDEEMER), 8/15/1989