

# 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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***“The name of Jesus is in fact the great foundation of the faith that turns people into children of God. The Catholic Faith indeed consists in the news of Jesus Christ as light of the soul, gate of life, and foundation of eternal salvation.”***

~SAINT BERNARDINE OF SIENA

**Monday, May 18 ~ Sixth Week in the Season of Easter  
Saint John I, Pope and Martyr**

**Holy Gospel: John 15:26-16:4a** Jesus said to his disciples: “When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning. “I have told you this so that you may not fall away. They will expel you from the synagogues; in fact, the hour is coming when everyone who kills you will think he is offering worship to God. They will do this because they have not known either the Father or me. I have told you this so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you.”

**Meditation:** Jesus tells us much about the Holy Spirit. First, the Holy Spirit is inseparably one with the Father and the Son. It is the Holy Spirit who gives life – the very life of God – and who kindles faith in hearts receptive to God's word. The Spirit makes it possible for us to know God personally. He gives us experiential knowledge of God as our Father. The Spirit witnesses to our spirit that the Father has indeed sent his Son into the world to redeem it and has raised his Son Jesus from the dead and has seated him at his right hand in glory and power. The Holy Spirit reveals to us the knowledge, wisdom and plan of God for the ages and the Spirit enables us to see with the "eyes of faith" what the Father and the Son are doing. Through the gift and working of the Holy Spirit we become witnesses to the great work of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus warned his disciples that they could expect persecution just as Jesus was opposed and treated with hostility. We have been given the Holy Spirit to help us live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Spirit gives us courage and perseverance when we meet adversities and challenges. Do you pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen you in faith, hope and love and to give you courage and perseverance with hope when you meet adversities and challenges?

**Prayer:** Grant, O merciful God, that we may experience at all times the fruit produced by the paschal observances. 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.

**Prayer ~ Saint John I:** O God, who reward faithful souls and who have consecrated this day by the martyrdom of Pope Saint John the First, graciously hear the prayers of your people and grant that we, who venerate his merits, may imitate his constancy in the faith. 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 examined whom you turn to for help and support when you most need it? True friendship is strengthened in adversity. Jesus offers his disciples the best and truest of friends. Who is this promised friend? Jesus calls the Holy Spirit our Counselor and Advocate (also translated “Paraclete” or “Helper” or “Guide”). Counselor is a legal term for the one who will defend someone against an adversary and who guides that person during the ordeal of trial. The Holy Spirit is our Advocate and Helper who brings us safely through the challenges and adversities we must face in this life. As Jesus approaches the hour he was to be glorified – through his death on the cross and his resurrection – he revealed more fully to his disciples the person and role of the Holy Spirit.

**Tuesday, May 19 ~ Sixth Week in the Season of Easter**

**Holy Gospel: John 16:12-15** Jesus said to his disciples: “I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his

own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.”

**Meditation:** Jesus told his disciples that he would send them the Spirit of truth who will guide you into all the truth...and declare to you the things that are to come (John 16:13). Through the gift and working of the Holy Spirit poured out on the new community of faith on the day of Pentecost, we too are able to profess the same creed which the apostles proclaimed – that Jesus died, and was buried, and rose again on the third day, and will come again to judge, raise the dead, and give everlasting life (the Apostles Creed). We not only have the same faith given to the apostles and early believers, but we have the same Spirit in us who raised Jesus from the dead. The Lord Jesus gives each of us his Holy Spirit as our divine Teacher and Helper that we may grow in the knowledge and wisdom of God. Do you listen attentively to God's word and allow his Holy Spirit to give you understanding of God's truth and will for your life?

**Prayer:** Grant, we pray, O Lord, that, as we celebrate in mystery the solemnities of your Son's Resurrection, so, too, we may be worthy to rejoice at his coming with all the Saints. 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 we would all give to know all truths! Truth, however, is not something we create nor is it our discovery. It is the gift of God who is the possessor and the giver of all truth. Jesus tells his disciples that it is the role of the Holy Spirit to reveal what is true. How can this be? Skeptics of truth don't want to believe in an absolute Truth. If truth is objective then it must be submitted to as authoritative. Some fear the truth because they think it will inhibit their freedom to act and think as they wish. Jesus told his disciples that the truth will set you free (John 8:32). The truth liberates us from doubts, illusions, and fears. Since God is the source of all truth, then the closer we draw to him and listen to his word, the more we grow in the knowledge of him and of his great love and wisdom for us.

### **Wednesday, May 20 ~ Sixth Week in the Season of Easter Saints Bernadine of Siena, Priest**

**Holy Gospel: John 16:12-15** Jesus said to his disciples: “I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.”

**Meditation:** Jesus told his disciples that he would send them the Spirit of truth who will guide you into all the truth, and declare to you the things that are to come (John 16:13). Through the gift and working of the Holy Spirit poured out on the new community of faith on the day of Pentecost, we too are able to profess the same creed which the apostles proclaimed – that Jesus died, and was buried, and rose again on the third day, and will come again to judge, raise the dead, and give everlasting life (the Apostles Creed). We not only have the same faith given to the apostles and early believers, but we have the same Spirit in us who raised Jesus from the dead. The Lord Jesus gives each of us his Holy Spirit as our divine Teacher and Helper that we may grow in the knowledge and wisdom of God. Do you listen attentively to God's word and allow his Holy Spirit to give you understanding of God's truth and will for your life?

**Prayer:** Grant, we pray, O Lord, that, as we celebrate in mystery the solemnities of your Son's Resurrection, so, too, we may be worthy to rejoice at his coming with all the Saints. 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.

**A Prayer to Saint Bernardine of Siena:** Saint Bernardine of Siena, words were very important to you. You spent most of your life speaking the golden words of Jesus' mercy and his Holy Name, and you abhorred words that were shameful. Pray for us that we may always choose to speak Jesus' name with reverence, and choose words of love over words of shame. Amen.

**Contemplation:** What we would all give to know all truths! Truth, however, is not something we create nor is it our discovery. It is the gift of God who is the possessor and the giver of all truth. Jesus tells his disciples that it is the role of the Holy Spirit to reveal what is true. How can this be? Skeptics of truth don't want to believe in an absolute Truth. If truth is objective then it must be submitted to as authoritative. Some fear the truth because they think it will inhibit their freedom to act and think as they wish. Jesus told his disciples that the truth will set you free (John 8:32). The truth liberates us from doubts, illusions,

and fears. Since God is the source of all truth, then the closer we draw to him and listen to his word, the more we grow in the knowledge of him and of his great love and wisdom for us.

**The Holy Name of Jesus – HIS:** This monogram of the Holy Name, common among Western Christians, comes from the first three letters in the Greek spelling of Jesus' name. Those letters are iota ("I"), eta ("H") and sigma (here rendered as its Roman equivalent: "S"). Variations: Sometimes the iota is rendered as a "J" (hence, "JHS"), or one will see the monogram in all Greek letters, or with the final sigma in a "C" shape (hence "IHC"), an alternate way of rendering the letter sigma. They all mean the same thing. The greatest promoters of the monogram were St. Bernardine of Siena and St. John Capistrano. They carried



with them on their missions in the turbulent cities of Italy a copy of the monogram of the Holy Name, surrounded by rays, painted on a wooden tablet, wherewith they blessed the sick and wrought great miracles. At the close of their sermons they exhibited this emblem to the faithful and asked them to prostrate themselves, to adore the Redeemer of mankind. They recommended their hearers to have the monogram of Jesus placed over the gates of their cities and above the doors of their dwelling. It became even more popularized after St. Bernardine encouraged a playing card maker in Bologna – a man whose business had been ruined because of the Saint's preaching against gambling – to make holy cards depicting it instead of making his usual fare. Because the manner in which St. Bernardine preached

this devotion was new, he was accused by his enemies, and brought before the tribunal of Pope Martin V. But St. John Capistrano defended his master so successfully that the pope not only permitted the worship of the Holy Name, but also assisted at a procession in which the holy monogram was carried. The tablet used by St. Bernardine is venerated at Santa Maria in Ara Coeli at Rome. Formalized devotion to the Holy Name is the fruit of the work of St. Bernardine of Siena, A.D. 1380-1444, the Franciscan who reformed his Order and preached fiery sermons all over Italy.

### **Thursday, May 21 ~ Sixth Week in the Season of Easter**

**Holy Gospel: John 16:16-20** Jesus said to his disciples: "A little while and you will no longer see me, and again a little while later and you will see me." So some of his disciples said to one another, "What does this mean that he is saying to us, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me,' and 'Because I am going to the Father'?" So they said, "What is this 'little while' of which he speaks? We do not know what he means." Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Are you discussing with one another what I said, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'? Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy."

**Meditation:** The world says take your joy now in whatever pleasures you can get from this present life – "eat, drink and be merry" as the saying goes. Jesus points to an "other-worldly" joy which transcends anything this world can offer. Jesus contrasts present sorrows with future joy. A woman in labor suffers the birth-pangs first, but then forgets her sorrow as soon as her new-born child comes to birth. We cannot avoid pain and sorrow if we wish to follow Jesus to the cross. But in the cross of Christ we find freedom, victory, and joy. It was Saint Thomas Aquinas who said: "No one can live without joy. That is why a man or woman deprived of spiritual joy will turn to carnal pleasures." Do you know the joy of the Lord?

**Prayer:** O God, who made your people partakers in your redemption, grant, we pray, that we may perpetually render thanks for the Resurrection of the Lord. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** How do "weeping" and "rejoicing" go together? Jesus contrasts present sorrows with the future glory to be revealed to those who put their hope in God. For the people of Israel time was divided into two ages – the present age and the age to come. The prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah as the dawn of a new age. Jesus tells his disciples two important truths. First, he must leave them to return to his Father and second, he will surely come again at the end of time to usher in the new age of God's kingdom. Jesus' orientation for the time between his first coming and his return in glory at the end of the world is a reversal of the world's fortunes. Do you weep and rejoice in the Lord?

### **Friday, May 22 ~ Sixth Week in the Season of Easter Saint Rita of Cascia, Religious**

**Holy Gospel: John 16:20-23** Jesus said to his disciples: "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy. When a woman is in labor,

she is in anguish because her hour has arrived; but when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the pain because of her joy that a child has been born into the world. So you also are now in anguish. But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. On that day you will not question me about anything. Amen, amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you.”

**Meditation:** Why does Jesus tell his disciples to weep and mourn? Jesus was neither a pessimist nor a masochist, and he was certainly more than a realist! The way to happiness and joy in the kingdom of God is through the cross. Sin must be brought to the cross of Jesus Christ and evil can only be completely mastered by the power of God's redeeming love. Jesus told his disciples that it was more blessed to mourn for sin because it would yield the fruit of peace, joy, and righteousness. Jesus knew that the cross would be a stumbling block for those who refused to believe in him. The cross for Jesus was not defeat but victory – victory over sin, over the forces of evil in the world, and over the devil – the arch-enemy of God and humankind.

**Prayer:** Grant us, O Lord, we pray, that the course of our world may be directed by your peaceful rule and that your Church may rejoice, untroubled in her devotion. 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.

**Prayer ~ Saint Rita of Cascia:** Bestow on us, we pray, O Lord, the wisdom and strength of the Cross, with which you were pleased to endow Saint Rita, so that, suffering in every tribulation with Christ, we may participate ever more deeply in his Paschal Mystery. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** We must remember that through his death on the cross, Jesus won for us new life and freedom over the power of sin, despair, and death. The Easter victory of Jesus teaches us courage in the face of suffering and death. In the resurrection of Christ our fears are laid to rest. His resurrection is total, final triumph, and for us peace and joy at the end. We will have troubles in the present reality. Through the eyes of faith, we know the final outcome – complete victory over sin, suffering, and death in Jesus Christ. That is why we can pray confidently now, knowing that the Father will give us everything we need to live as his children and as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know the Easter joy of Christ's victory over sin and death?

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; prayers are from *The Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing, 2011; Daily meditations and contemplations adapted from the Irish Jesuits' *Sacred Space* web page and *Biblical Medications for Easter* by Rev. Carroll Stuhmueller, C.P.; information about saints, solemnities, feasts and memorials courtesy of the Catholic Culture web site.

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