

# 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 MONTH OF JUNE IS DEDICATED TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS ~

***"In the Sacred Heart every treasure of wisdom and knowledge is hidden. In that Divine Heart beats God's infinite love for everyone, for each one of us individually."***

~SAINT JOHN PAUL II

**Monday, June 15 ~ Eleventh Week in the Season of Ordinary Time  
Saint John Fisher, Bishop and Martyr; Saint Thomas More, Martyr**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:38-42** Jesus said to his disciples: "You have heard that it was said, *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*. But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow."

**Meditation:** Jesus does something quite remarkable in today's gospel – He transforms the law of mercy with grace and loving kindness. Jesus also makes clear that there is no room for retaliation, which is an all-too-human response to particular types of challenge. We must not only avoid returning evil for evil, but we must seek the good of those who wish us ill. Do you accept insults, as Jesus did, with no resentment or malice? When you are compelled by others to do more than you think you deserve, do you insist on your rights, or do you respond with grace and cheerfulness? What makes a Christian different from everyone else? What makes Christianity distinct from any other religion? It is grace - treating others, not as they deserve, but as God wishes them to be treated - with loving-kindness and mercy. Only the cross of Jesus Christ can free us from the tyranny of malice, hatred, revenge, and resentment and gives us the courage to return evil with good. Such love and grace has power to heal and to save from destruction. Do you know the power of Christ's redeeming love and mercy?

**Prayer:** O God, who in martyrdom have brought true faith to its highest expression, graciously grant that, strengthened through the intercession of Saints John Fisher and Thomas More, we may confirm by the witness of our life the faith we profess with our lips. 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 someone insults you or tries to take advantage of you, how do you respond? Do you repay in kind? Jesus approached the question of just retribution with a surprising revelation of God's intention for how we should treat others, especially those who mistreat us. When Jesus spoke about God's law, he did something no one had done before. He gave a new standard based not just on the requirements of justice (i.e. giving each their due), but based on the law of grace and love. Jesus knew the law and its intention better than any jurist or legal expert could imagine. He quoted from the oldest recorded law in the world: If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe (Exodus 21:23-25). Such a law today seems cruel, but it was meant to limit vengeance as a first step towards mercy. This law was not normally taken literally but served as a guide for a judge in a law court for assessing punishment and penalty (ref. Deuteronomy 19:18).

**Tuesday, June 16 ~ Eleventh Week in the Season of Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:43-48** Jesus said to his disciples: "You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what

recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

**Meditation:** Think about what Jesus was saying when He said that each of us must be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. The original meaning of “perfect” in Aramaic is “completeness” or “wholeness – not lacking in what is essential.” God gives us every good gift in Jesus Christ so that we may not lack anything we need to do his will and to live as his sons and daughters. He knows our weakness and sinfulness better than we do. And he assures us of his love, mercy, and grace to follow in his ways. Do you want to grow in your love for God and for your neighbor? Ask the Holy Spirit to change and transform you in the image of the Father that you may walk in the joy and freedom of the gospel.

**Prayer:** O God, strength of those who hope in you, graciously hear our pleas, and, since without you mortal frailty can do nothing, grant us always the help of your grace, that in following your commands we may please you by our resolve and our deeds. 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 Christians different from others and what makes Christianity distinct from any other religion? It is grace – treating others, not as they deserve, but as God wishes them to be treated – with loving-kindness and mercy. God is good to the unjust as well as the just. His love embraces saint and sinner alike. God seeks our highest good and teaches us to seek the greatest good of others, even those who hate and abuse us. Our love for others, even those who are ungrateful and selfish towards us, must be marked by the same kindness and mercy which God has shown to us. It is easier to show kindness and mercy when we can expect to benefit from doing so. How much harder when we can expect nothing in return. Our prayer for those who do us ill both breaks the power of revenge and releases the power of love to do good in the face of evil. How can we possibly love those who cause us harm or ill-will? With God all things are possible. He gives power and grace to those who believe and accept the gift of the Holy Spirit. His love conquers all, even our hurts, fears, prejudices and sorrows. Only the cross of Jesus Christ can free us from the tyranny of malice, hatred, revenge, and resentment and gives us the courage to return evil with good. Such love and grace has power to heal and to save from destruction. Do you know the power of Christ’s redeeming love and mercy?

### **Wednesday, June 17 ~ Eleventh Week in the Season of Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: 6:1-6,16-18** Jesus said to his disciples: “Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to others to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”

**Meditation:** This gospel passage should be familiar to everyone as it is proclaimed on Ash Wednesday – the beginning of the Season of Lent. And yet we sometimes forget that what we learn about ourselves and our lifestyle during Lent should be carried out not just for the 40 days of Lent but throughout our lifetime. So why, then, did Jesus single out prayer, fasting, and almsgiving for his disciples? The Jewish people considered these three as the cardinal works of the religious life. These were seen as the key signs of a pious person, the three great pillars on which the good life was based. Jesus pointed to the heart of the matter. Why do you pray, fast, and give alms? To draw attention to yourself so that others may notice and think highly of you? Or to give glory to God? The Lord warns his disciples of self-seeking glory – the preoccupation with looking good and seeking praise from others. True piety is something more than feeling good or looking holy. True piety is loving devotion to God. It is an attitude of awe, reverence, worship and obedience. It is a gift and working of the Holy Spirit that enables us to devote our lives to God with a holy desire to please him in all things (ref. Isaiah 11:1-2).

**Prayer:** O God, strength of those who hope in you, graciously hear our pleas, and, since without you mortal frailty can do nothing, grant us always the help of your grace, that in following your commands we may please you by our resolve and our deeds. 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 is the reward which Jesus points out to his disciples by living a life of regular prayer, fasting and almsgiving (as opposed to just 40 days a year)? It is communion with God our Father. In him alone we find the fullness of life and happiness, truth and beauty, love and joy. Saint Augustine wrote the following prayer in his *Confessions*: "When I am completely united to you, there will be no more sorrows or trials; entirely full of you, my life will be complete. The Lord rewards those who seek him with humble and repentant hearts. He renews us each day and he gives us new hearts of love and compassion that we may serve him and our neighbor with glad and generous hearts. Do you want to grow in your love for God and for your neighbor? Seek him expectantly in prayer, with fasting, and in generous giving to those in need."

### **Thursday, June 18 ~ Eleventh Week in the Season of Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 6:7-15** Jesus said to his disciples: "In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This is how you are to pray: 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' "If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions."

**Meditation:** It is through the gift of the Holy Spirit that we can know God personally and call him "Abba, Father" (ref. Romans 8:15). We can approach God our Father with confidence and boldness because Jesus Christ has opened the way to heaven for us through his death and resurrection. When we ask God the Father for help, he fortunately does not give us what we deserve. Instead, he responds with grace and favor and mercy. It is his nature to love generously and to forgive mercifully. When he gives he gives more than we need so we will have something to share with others in their need as well. God the Father is kind and forgiving towards us and he expects us to treat our neighbor the same. Do you treat others as they deserve, or do you treat them as the Lord would treat you with his grace and favor and mercy? Jesus' prayer includes an injunction that we must ask God to forgive us in proportion as we forgive those who have wronged us. Ask the Lord to free your heart of any anger, bitterness, resentment, selfishness, indifference, or coldness towards others. Let the Holy Spirit fill you with the fire of his burning love and compassion and with the river of his overflowing mercy and kindness.

**Prayer:** O God, strength of those who hope in you, graciously hear our pleas, and, since without you mortal frailty can do nothing, grant us always the help of your grace, that in following your commands we may please you by our resolve and our deeds. 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 you pray, do you pray with joy and confidence? The Jewish people were noted for their devotion to prayer. Formal prayer was prescribed for three set times a day. And the rabbis had a prayer for every occasion. Jesus warns his disciples against formalism, making prayer something mechanical and devoid of meaning, with little thought for God. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray he gave them the disciple's prayer, what we call the *Our Father* or *Lord's Prayer*. This prayer of Jesus calls God "our Father" and boldly asks for the things we need to live as his sons and daughters.

### **Friday, June 19 ~ Eleventh Week in the Season of Ordinary Time Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30** 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 little ones. 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. 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:** Have you come to know the mind and heart 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 (Ephesians 3:14-15). Jesus' prayer also contains a warning that pride can keep us from the love and knowledge of God. What makes us ignorant and blind to the things of God? Certainly intellectual pride, coldness of heart, and stubbornness of will shut out God and his kingdom. Pride is the root of all vice and the strongest influence propelling us to sin. It first vanquishes the 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.

**Prayer:** Grant, we pray, almighty God, that we, who glory in the Heart of your beloved Son and recall the wonders of his love for us, may be made worthy to receive an overflowing measure of grace from that fount of heavenly gifts. 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 simple of heart are not simpletons – 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 – Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Lord, Savior and Redeemer. They seek one thing – the “summum bonum” or “greatest good” who is God and His Son. Simplicity of heart is aligned with humility, the queen of virtues, because humility inclines the heart towards grace and truth. Just as pride is the root of every sin and evil, so humility is the only soil in which the grace of God can take root. It alone takes the right attitude before God and allows him as God to do all. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble (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? Do you align your heart to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus? Pope Benedict XVI, speaking of the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, once said: “In biblical language, ‘heart’ indicates the center of the person where his sentiments and intentions dwell. In the Heart of the Redeemer we adore God's love for humanity, his will for universal salvation, his infinite mercy. Practicing the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Christ therefore means adoring that Heart which, after having loved us to the end, was pierced by a spear and from high on the Cross poured out blood and water, an inexhaustible source of new life” (Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus June 5, 2005).

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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## **Meditation – Month of June: Dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus** ***The Eucharistic Presence of the Sacred Heart***

In the Holy Eucharist the incarnate Son of God is present whole and entire — soul and body, divinity and humanity. In every consecrated Host, therefore, His Sacred Heart is present, an integral part of His glorified body, that living organ which for all the years of His mortal life pulsed His precious blood through artery and vein, and faithfully responded to every joy and every sorrow of His soul in both its Christ-life and its Jesus-life. After the consecration at every Holy Mass, in every Host received in Holy Communion, and in every tabernacle wherein the Blessed Sacrament is actually housed, there is present the Heart which is the most magnificent *sanctum* of the Holy Trinity and the universal instrument for the realization of all the Savior designs of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; there is present the Heart by whose wisdom, mercy, and love those Savior designs were so gloriously executed; there is the Heart which is the living source and symbol of His whole life and work, both as the Christ of God and as the Jesus of the world, and therefore the source and symbol of the floods of light and streams of energy poured out to souls after that fatal hour in Paradise; yes, there is present on the altar the Heart which accounts even for this Eucharistic Presence itself, since it was from the love fountains of this Heart that came His desire to eat that Pasch with His beloved Apostles on Holy Thursday night and to speak those mysteriously sweet and mighty words: “Do this in commemoration of Me!” — from *Our Way to the Father* by Fr. Leo M. Krenz, S.J.

