

# Lectio Divina

## SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

“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 January is dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus.*

***"In dangers, in doubts, in difficulties, think of Mary, call upon Mary. Let not her name depart from your lips, never suffer it to leave your heart. And that you may obtain the assistance of her prayer, neglect not to walk in her footsteps. With her for guide, you shall never go astray; while invoking her, you shall never lose heart; so long as she is in your mind, you are safe from deception; while she holds your hand, you cannot fall; under her protection you have nothing to fear; if she walks before you, you shall not grow weary; if she shows you favor, you shall reach the goal."*** +SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

### **Monday, January 1 ~ Solemnity of Holy Mary, Mother of God**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 2:16-21** The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

**Meditation:** In fulfillment of this precept, Mary's newborn child is given the name *Jesus* on the eighth day according to the Jewish custom. Joseph and Mary gave the name *Jesus* because that is the name given by God's messenger before *Jesus* was conceived in Mary's womb. This name signifies *Jesus'* identity and his mission. The literal Hebrew means *the Lord saves*. Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in *Jesus* his eternal Son made man, will save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). In the birth and naming of this child we see the wondrous design and plan of God in giving us a Savior who would bring us grace, mercy, and freedom from the power of sin and the fear of death. The name *Jesus* signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of his Son who became man for our salvation. Peter the Apostle exclaimed that there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved (Acts 2:12). In the name of *Jesus* demons flee, cripples walk, the blind see, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised. At the name of *Jesus* every knee shall bow; His name is exalted far above every other name. The name *Jesus* is at the heart of all Christian prayer. It is through *Jesus*, with *Jesus* and in *Jesus* that we pray to God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Prayer:** O God, who through the fruitful virginity of Blessed Mary bestowed on the human race the grace of eternal salvation, grant, we pray, that we may experience the intercession of her, through whom we were found worthy to receive the author of life, our Lord *Jesus Christ*, your Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Mary was “full of grace” not only for being chosen to be God’s mother but in her total openness to be filled with that love of God. We too are constantly “graced” and we too can be full of grace not because we were baptized into the Catholic community, but by our own total, active identification with the way of *Jesus* by our opening up to the call of God as it unfolds in the unique circumstances of our own lives. We do this through total and unconditional service of those around us. It is a formidable challenge at times, but it also brings countless joys. To be a true Christian – a true disciple and follower of Christ is demanding but not insurmountable; it is not for the hypocrite or faint of heart. To be a true Christian is to first go beyond mere lip service calling *Jesus* “Lord, Lord” but not living according to Christ’s way – it is for those who truly believe in *Jesus Christ* as their Lord, Savior and Redeemer; those who see *Jesus Christ* as the Good Shepherd who allow them to be lovingly led by Christ; those who want to be “doers of the Word and not hearers only” (James 1:22). Prove to Christ, to the world, and to yourself that you are Christian.

## **Tuesday, January 2 ~ Season of Christmas**

### **Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church**

**Holy Gospel: John 1:19-28** This is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said: "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said." Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

**Meditation:** John the Baptist bridges the Old and New Testaments. He is the last of the Old Testament Prophets who points the way to the Messiah. He is the first of the New Testament witnesses and martyrs. He is the herald who prepares the way for Jesus and who announces his mission to the people: Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! John saw from a distance what the Messiah came to accomplish – our redemption from slavery to sin and our adoption as sons and daughters of God, our heavenly Father.

**Prayer:** O God, who were pleased to give light to your Church by the example and teaching of the Bishops, Saints Basil and Gregory, grant, we pray, that in humility we may learn your truth and practice it faithfully in charity. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** John was the greatest of the prophets, yet he lived as a humble and faithful servant of God. He pointed others to Jesus, Messiah and Savior of the world. The Catholic Church from the earliest of times has given John many titles which signify his mission: *Witness of the Lord, Trumpet of Heaven, Herald of Christ, Voice of the Word, Precursor of Truth, Friend of the Bridegroom, Crown of the Prophets, Forerunner of the Redeemer, Preparer of Salvation, Light of the Martyrs, and Servant of the Word*. By your life, by your faith, do you point others to Christ by your witness and example as John the Baptist did?

## **Wednesday, January 3 ~ Season of Christmas**

### **The Most Holy Name of Jesus**

**Holy Gospel: John 1:29-34** John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."

**Meditation:** John calls Jesus the *Lamb of God* and thus signifies Jesus' mission as the One who redeems us from our sins. The blood of the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12) delivered the Israelites in Egypt from death. The blood of Jesus, the true Passover Lamb who offered his life up for us on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 Corinthians 5:7), delivers us from everlasting death and destruction. It is significant that John was the son of a priest, Zachariah, who participated in the daily sacrifice of a lamb in the temple for the sins of the people (Exodus 29). In Jesus he saw the true and only sacrifice which delivers us from sin.

**Prayer:** O God, who founded the salvation of the human race on the Incarnation of your Word, give your peoples the mercy they implore, so that all may know there is no other name to be invoked but the Name of your Only Begotten Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Saint Alphonsus Liguori once wrote: "God hath given Him a Name which is above all names. And He commands that this name should be adored by the Angels, by men, and by devils: That in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth. If, then, all creatures are to adore this great name, still more ought we sinners to adore it, since it was in our behalf that this name of Jesus; which signifies Savior, was given to Him; and for this end also He came down from Heaven, namely, to save sinners: 'For us men and for our salvation He came down from

Heaven, and was made Man.' We ought to adore Him, and at the same time to thank God Who has given Him this name for our good; it is this name that consoles us, defends us, and makes us burn with love."

## **Thursday, January 4 ~ Season of Christmas**

### **Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious**

**Holy Gospel: John 1:35-42** John was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the *Messiah*," which is translated *Christ*. Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called *Cephas*," which is translated *Peter*.

**Meditation:** Jesus invites each of us to "come and see" for ourselves that his word is true, life-giving and everlasting. "Come and see" is God's invitation for fellowship and communion with the One who made us in love for love. Saint Augustine tells us something very important about God and how he relates to us: "If you hadn't been called by God, what could you have done to turn back? Didn't the very One who called you when you were opposed to Him make it possible for you to turn back?" It is God who initiates and who draws us to himself. Without his grace, mercy, and help we could not find him.

**Prayer:** O God, who crowned with the gift of true faith Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton's burning zeal to find you, grant by her intercession and example that we may always seek you with diligent love and find you in daily service with sincere faith. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** When two of John's disciples began to seek out Jesus, Jesus took the initiative to invite them into his company. He did not wait for them to get his attention. Instead he met them halfway. He asked them one of the most fundamental questions of life: "What are you looking for?" In other words, what were they looking for in Jesus, and what were they aiming to get out of life? Jesus asks each of us this very same question: "What's the goal of your life? What are you aiming for and trying to get out of life?" So, what is your response? Think about it, pray about it, then take up Jesus' invitation.

## **Friday, January 5 ~ Season of Christmas**

### **Saint John Neumann, Bishop**

**Holy Gospel: John 1:43-51** Jesus decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth." But Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Here is a true child of Israel. There is no duplicity in him." Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." And he said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see the sky opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

**Meditation:** The fig tree was a symbol of God's blessing and peace. It provided shade from the midday sun and a cool place to retreat and pray. It is very likely that Nathaniel had meditated "under the fig tree" on the Messianic prophecies and prayed for their fulfillment in his time. Perhaps he dozed off for a midday nap and dreamed of God's kingdom like Jacob did when he saw a vision of the ladder which united earth with heaven (ref. Genesis 28:12-17). Nathaniel accepted Jesus as Messiah and Lord because Jesus spoke to the need of his innermost being – the desire to know God personally and to be united with him in his glory. Jesus' response to Nathaniel's new faith is the promise that he himself will be the "ladder which unites earth with heaven". God had opened a door for Jacob that brought him and his people into a new relationship with the living God. In Jacob's dream God revealed his angelic host and showed him the throne of heaven and promised Jacob that he and descendants would dwell with the living God.

**Prayer:** O God, who called the Bishop Saint John Neumann, renowned for his charity and pastoral service, to shepherd your people in America, grant by his intercession that, as we foster the Christian education of youth and are strengthened by the witness of brotherly love, we may constantly increase the family of

your Church. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Nathaniel was very skeptical. He didn't like Nazareth (noted by his cynical quip) and didn't want to have anything to do with people who came from such a place. How could the Messiah come from a town at the crossroads with gentiles and people of other religions? Perhaps we are like Nathaniel at times. We reject others out of rivalry or prejudice, or we keep them at a distance because we find fault with something about them – the schools they went to, the street they live on or neighborhood they grew up in, the kind of car they drive, or on a more global scale their manner of speech, the way they dress, their customs, or whatever we dislike about them and "their kind." Rather than argue with his friend, Philip took the wiser strategy of inviting Nathaniel to "come and see" for himself who this Jesus claimed to be. Clever arguments rarely win people to the gospel, but a genuine encounter with the person of Jesus Christ can transform one's life forever. Remember the words of Saint Augustine: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

## **Saturday, January 6 ~ Season of Christmas** **Saint André Bessette, Religious**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 3:23-38** When Jesus began his ministry he was about thirty years of age. He was the son, as was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

**Meditation:** Luke states that Jesus was thirty years old when he began his public ministry. Why did Jesus spend thirty years in obscurity in the village of Nazareth when his purpose for coming to earth was to save us the world from destruction? This is significant for at least a couple of reasons. First, it shows that Jesus was responsible and faithful in the mundane duties of family life. Before he embraced public duties, he showed his fidelity and concern for domestic duties. Tradition has it that Joseph died when Jesus was young. Jesus assumed the responsibility for caring for his mother. Jesus taught his disciples the precept that "he who is faithful in little, will be faithful in much" by his personal example. If we want to be fit to carry on the Lord's mission today, we must learn faithfulness in great matters by first being faithful in little matters of home and workday life.

**Prayer:** Lord our God, friend of the lowly, who gave your servant, Saint André Bessette, a great devotion to Saint Joseph and a special commitment to the poor and afflicted, help us through his intercession to follow his example of prayer and love and so come to share with him in your glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Genealogies are very important. They give us our roots, and help us to understand our heritage – where and whom we come from. Matthew's genealogy (Matthew 1:1-17) traces Jesus' lineage back to Abraham, the father of the chosen people. Luke's genealogy in today's gospel traces Jesus' lineage all the way back to Adam, father of the human race. In doing so Luke stresses the real humanity of Jesus. Jesus came not just to save the chosen people but all humankind as well. Jesus is the fulfillment of all God's promises. He is the hope not only for the people of the Old Covenant but for all nations as well. He is the Savior of the world. In him we receive adoption as sons and daughters of the living God.

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