

# 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 October is dedicated to the Holy Rosary*

***“The greatest method of praying is to pray the Rosary. It is a method filled with holy simplicity yet profound power. It focuses our mind on the mysteries of salvation and places our heart in the hands of Mary.” +SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES***

**Monday, September 29 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time  
Feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Archangels**

**Holy Gospel: John 1:47-51** 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 heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

**Meditation:** One of the most remarkable revelations recorded in Scripture is the dream of Jacob (Genesis 28:12-17). 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. Who are the angels and why do they intervene between heaven and earth? The scriptures tell us the angels are God's servants and messengers. “They are the mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word” (Psalm 103:20). The angels belong to Christ and were created for and through him (Colossians 1:16). The Letter to the Hebrews speaks of the role of the angels in God's plan of salvation: “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14) The angels are not only messengers but protectors and guardians as well. “For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways” (Psalm 91:11). We are not alone in our struggle against sin and evil in the world. The armies of heaven fight for us and with us in the spiritual battle for our hearts, minds, and wills.

**Prayer:** O God, who dispose in marvelous order ministries both angelic and human, graciously grant that our life on earth may be defended by those who watch over us as they minister perpetually to you in heaven. 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:** Jesus' response to Nathaniel's new faith is the promise that Jesus himself will be the “ladder which unites earth with heaven.” Jesus proclaims that he is the fulfillment of the promise made to the Patriarch Jacob and his descendants. Jesus is the true ladder or stairway to heaven. In Jesus' incarnation, the divine Son of God taking on human flesh for our sake, we see the union of heaven and earth – God making his dwelling with us and bringing us into the heavenly reality of his kingdom. Jesus' death on the cross where he defeated sin and won new life for us through his resurrection opens the way for each of us to come into a new relationship with God as his sons and daughters. The Lord Jesus opens the way for each of us to “ascend to heaven” and to bring “heaven to earth” in the daily circumstances of our lives. God's kingdom is present in those who seek him and who do his will. Through the gift of faith God opens a door for each one of us to the heavenly reality of his kingdom. Do you see and believe the heavenly reality with the “eyes of faith?”

**About this Feast and the Archangels:** The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us that, “The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls “angels” is a truth of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition.” Angels are pure, created spirits.

The name angel means servant or messenger of God. Angels are celestial or heavenly beings, on a higher order than human beings. Angels have no bodies and do not depend on matter for their existence or activity. They are distinct from saints, which men can become. Angels have intellect and will, and are immortal. They are a vast multitude, but each is an individual person. Archangels are one of the nine choirs of angels listed in the Bible. The name of the **Archangel Michael** means, in Hebrew, *who is like unto God?* and he is also known as "the prince of the heavenly host." He is usually pictured as a strong warrior, dressed in armor and wearing sandals. His name appears in Scripture four times, twice in the Book of Daniel, and once each in the Epistle of St. Jude and the Book of Revelation. From Revelation we learn of the battle in heaven, with St. Michael and his angels combating Lucifer and the other fallen angels (or devils). We invoke St. Michael to help us in our fight against Satan; to rescue souls from Satan, especially at the hour of death; to be the champion of the Jews in the Old Testament and now Christians; and to bring souls to judgment. **Archangel Gabriel's** name means *God is my strength*. Biblically he appears three times as a messenger. He had been sent to Daniel to explain a vision concerning the Messiah. He appeared to Zachary when he was offering incense in the Temple, to foretell the birth of his son, St. John the Baptist. St. Gabriel is most known as the angel chosen by God to be the messenger of the Annunciation, to announce to mankind the mystery of the Incarnation. The angel's salutation to our Lady, so simple and yet so full of meaning, Hail Mary, full of grace, has become the constant and familiar prayer of all Christian people. Our knowledge of the **Archangel Raphael** comes to us from the book of Tobit. His mission as wonderful healer and fellow traveler with the youthful Tobias has caused him to be invoked for journeys and at critical moments in life. Tradition also holds that Raphael is the angel that stirred the waters at the healing sheep pool in Bethesda. His name means *God has healed*.

## **Tuesday, September 30 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time**

### **Saint Jerome, Priest and Doctor of the Church**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 9:51-56** When the days for Jesus to be taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, and he sent messengers ahead of him. On the way they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they journeyed to another village.

**Meditation:** Are you surprised to see two of Jesus' disciples praying for the destruction of a Samaritan village? The Jews and Samaritans had been divided for centuries. Jewish pilgrims who passed through Samaritan territory were often assaulted. Jesus did the unthinkable for a Jew. He not only decided to travel through Samaritan territory at personal risk, but he also asked for hospitality in one of their villages! Jesus' offer of friendship was rebuffed. Is there any wonder that the disciples were indignant and felt justified in wanting to see retribution done to this village? Wouldn't you respond the same way? Jesus, however, rebukes his disciples for their lack of toleration. Jesus had "set his face toward Jerusalem" to die on a cross that all might be reconciled with God and be united as one people in Christ.

**Prayer:** O God, who gave the Priest Saint Jerome a living and tender love for Sacred Scripture, grant that your people may be ever more fruitfully nourished by your Word and find in it the fount of life. 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:** Tolerance is a much needed virtue today. But aren't we often tolerant for the wrong thing or for the wrong motive? Christian love seeks the highest good of both one's neighbor and one's enemy, rooted in the laws of God and the teachings of Christ and his Church – not the "political correctness" ideology that so many embrace. As Pope Benedict XVI noted in 2005: "It is the duty of every person of good will, and especially of every believer, to help build a peaceful society and to overcome the temptation towards aggressive and futile confrontation between different cultures and ethnic groups. This goal can only be achieved if at the heart of the economic, social and cultural development of each community is a proper respect for life and for the dignity of every human person. A healthy society always promotes respect for the inviolable and inalienable rights of all people. Without "an objective moral grounding, not even democracy is capable of ensuring a stable peace" (*Evangelium Vitae*, 70).

## **Wednesday, October 1 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time**

### **Saint Therese of the Child Jesus ~ The "little flower"**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 9:57-62** As Jesus and his disciples were proceeding on their journey, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky

have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head." And to another he said, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, let me go first and bury my father." But he answered him, "Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the Kingdom of God." And another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home." Jesus answered him, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the Kingdom of God."

**Meditation:** Are you ready to follow the Lord wherever he may lead you? With the call the Lord gives the grace to respond and the strength to follow all the way to the end. Why does Jesus issue a challenge with the call? Jesus was utterly honest in telling people what it would cost to follow him. When a would-be disciple approached Jesus and said he was ready to follow, Jesus told him it would require sacrifice — the sacrifice of certain creaturely comforts. Jesus appealed to this man's heart and told him to detach himself from whatever might hold him back. Spiritual detachment is a necessary step for following the Lord. It frees us to give ourselves without reserve to the Lord and his service. While many of us may not need to give up the comfort of our own home and bed to follow Jesus, we, nonetheless, must be willing to part with anything that might stand in the way of doing God's will. Another would-be disciple said he would follow as soon as he had buried his father. What he meant by this expression was that he felt the need to return to his home to take care of his father through old age until he died. The third had no obligation to return home, but simply wanted to go back and say good-bye. Jesus surprised these would-be disciples with the stark truth that nothing should hinder us from following the Lord. Was Jesus being harsh and rude to his would-be followers? Not really. We are free to decide whether we will take the path which Jesus offers. But if we choose to go, then the Lord wants us to count the cost and choose for it freely.

**Prayer:** O God, who open your Kingdom to those who are humble and to little ones, lead us to follow trustingly in the little way of Saint Therese, so that through her intercession we may see your eternal glory revealed. 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:** You may be asking: "What does the story of a plowman have to do with the journey?" A plowman who looked back while plowing caused his furrow – the "trough" or groove in the earth that he was plowing – to be crooked. He had to look straight ahead in order to keep the plow from going off course. Likewise, if we look back on what we have freely left behind to follow the Lord, our path will likely diverge and we'll miss what God has for us. That is why the words of Pope Saint John Paul II, in proclaiming St. Therese of Lisieux a Doctor of the Church, are worth contemplating: "Therese of Lisieux did not only grasp and describe the profound truth of love as the center and heart of the church, but in her short life she lived it intensely. It is precisely this convergence of doctrine and concrete experience, of truth and life, of teaching and practice, which shines with particular brightness in this saint and which makes her an attractive model especially for young people and for those who are seeking true meaning for their life. Before the emptiness of so many words, Therese offers another solution, the one Word of salvation which, understood and lived in silence, becomes a source of renewed life. She counters a rational culture, so often overcome by practical materialism, with the disarming simplicity of the 'little way' which, by returning to the essentials, leads to the secret of all life: the divine love that surrounds and penetrates every human venture. In a time like ours, so frequently marked by an ephemeral and hedonistic culture, this new doctor of the church proves to be remarkably effective in enlightening the minds and hearts of those who hunger and thirst for truth and love."

## **Thursday, October 2 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time**

### **Memorial of the Guardian Angels**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 18:1-5,10** The disciples approached Jesus and said, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me. "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father."

**Meditation:** Jesus warned his disciples to "not despise the little ones." God dwells with the lowly and regards them with compassion. His angels watch over them as guardians. God has not left us alone in our struggle "to refuse evil and to choose good" (ref. Isaiah 7:15). The angels are God's "ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation" (ref. Heb. 1:14).

**Prayer:** O God, who in your unfathomable providence are pleased to send your holy Angels to guard us, hear our supplication as we cry to you, that we may always be defended by their protection and rejoice

eternally in their company. 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:** Saint Basil the Great once said, "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life." Angels ministered to Jesus after his temptation in the wilderness and during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. The angels will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgment (ref. Matt. 25:31). The angels tell us that this universe is not just materialistic. The fallen angels, led by Satan, seek our destruction. If they cannot induce us to disown our faith and allegiance to Christ, they attempt to divert us from doing the will of God by distracting us with good things that weigh us down and make us indifferent towards the things of God. God gives us the help of his angelic hosts and he gives us spiritual weapons, the shield of faith and the breastplate of righteousness (ref. Ephesians 6:1-11), to resist the devil and his lies. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we, too, join with angelic choirs in singing the praises of God.

**About this Memorial:** Angels are servants and messengers from God. "Angel" in Greek means "messenger." In unseen ways the angels help us on our earthly pilgrimage by assisting us in work and study, helping us in temptation and protecting us from physical danger. The idea that each soul has assigned to it a personal guardian angel has been long accepted by the Church and is a truth of our faith. From the Gospel of today's liturgy we read: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father" (Matthew 18:10). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that "the existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls 'angels' is a truth of faith (328)." From our birth until our death, man is surrounded by the protection and intercession of angels, particularly our guardian angel: "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life (336)."

### Friday, October 3 ~ Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

**Holy Gospel: Luke 10:13-16** Jesus said to them, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And as for you, Capernaum, 'Will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to the netherworld.' Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

**Meditation:** If Jesus were to visit your community today, what would he say? Would he issue a warning like the one he gave to Chorazin and Bethsaida? And how would you respond? Wherever Jesus went he did mighty works to show the people how much God had for them. Chorazin and Bethsaida had been blessed with the visitation of God. They heard the good news and experienced the wonderful works which Jesus did for them. Why was Jesus upset with these communities? The word woe is also translated as alas. It is as much as an expression of sorrowful pity as it is of anger. Why does Jesus lament and issue a stern warning? The people who heard the gospel here very likely responded with indifference. Jesus upbraids them for doing nothing! Repentance demands change — a change of heart and way of life. God's word is life-giving and it saves us from destruction — the destruction of soul as well as body. Jesus' anger is directed toward sin and everything which hinders us from doing the will of God and receiving his blessing. In love we must walk in his way of truth and freedom, grace and mercy, justice and holiness.

**Prayer:** O God, who manifest your almighty power above all by pardoning and showing mercy, bestow, we pray, your grace abundantly upon us and make those hastening to attain your promises heirs to the treasures of heaven. 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:** If Jesus were to visit your neighborhood community and walk the streets of our town today, what would he say? Would he issue a warning like the one he gave to Chorazin and Bethsaida? And how would you respond? Wherever Jesus went he did mighty works to show the people how much God had done for them. Chorazin and Bethsaida had been blessed with the visitation of God. They heard the good news and experienced the wonderful works which Jesus did for them.

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 the Catholic Culture web site.

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