

# Lectio Divina

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

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*The month of August is dedicated to The Immaculate Heart of Mary.*

***"Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess You have given me: I surrender it all to You to be disposed of according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough and will desire nothing more."***

~THE "PRAYER OF SURRENDER" OF SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

**Monday, July 29 ~ Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time  
Saints Martha, Mary and Lazarus**

**Holy Gospel: John 11:19-27** Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother [Lazarus, who had died]. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and anyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."

**Meditation:** Martha, like many Orthodox Jews, believed in the life to come. The loss of her brother Lazarus did not diminish her hope in the resurrection – in fact she gently chides Jesus for not coming sooner to save Lazarus from an untimely death. But Jesus does something unexpected and remarkable, both to strengthen her faith and hope in the life to come, and to give her a sign of what he was to accomplish through his own death and resurrection. Jesus gave to her belief a new and profound meaning: He came from the Father to defeat sin and death for us and to restore life to those who believe in him. Jesus states unequivocally the he himself is the Resurrection and the Life. And the life that he offers is abundant life – life which comes from God himself. Jesus also offers everlasting life – the fullness of life which knows no end.

**Prayer:** Grant, we pray, almighty God, that the example of your Saints may spur us on to a better life, so that we, who celebrate the memory of Saints Martha, Mary and Lazarus, may also imitate without ceasing their deeds. 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:** In light of what unfolds in today's Gospel, we might ask ourselves what gives us hope and joy in the face of death? The loss of a loved one naturally produces grief and anguish of heart. When Martha, the sister of Lazarus and a close friend of Jesus, heard that Jesus was coming to pay respects for the loss of Lazarus, she immediately went out to meet him before he could get to her house. What inspired her to leave the funeral gathering in order to seek out Jesus? Was it simply the companionship and consolation of Jesus – a friend who loved her brother deeply? Or did she recognize in Jesus the hope that God would restore life through Christ who is our Savior? Probably both, with the latter building on the former; Jesus, who loves each of us as much as he loved Lazarus, is our sweetness and our hope – hope for eternal life with Him that can be ours by living an earthly life "through Him, with Him and in Him" as faithful disciples, loving Christ as He loves us.

**Tuesday, July 30 ~ Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time  
Saint Peter Chrysologus, Bishop and Doctor of the Church;  
Blessed Solanus Casey, Capuchin Friar**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 13:36-43** Jesus dismissed the crowds and went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." He said in reply, "He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seed the children of the Kingdom. The

weeds are the children of the Evil One, and the enemy who sows them is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his Kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

**Meditation:** There are different ways of accepting God's word and they produce different kinds of fruit accordingly. There is the prejudiced hearer who has a shut mind. Such a person is unteachable and turns a deaf ear to what they don't want to hear. Then there is the shallow hearer. He or she fails to think things out or think them through; they lack depth. They may initially respond with an emotional reaction; but when it wears off their mind wanders to something else. Another type of hearer is the person who has many interests or cares, but who lacks the ability to hear or comprehend what is truly important. Such a person is forever too busy to pray or too preoccupied to study and meditate and pray on God's word. He or she may work so hard that they are too tired to even think of anything else but their work. Then there is the one whose mind is open. Such a person is at all times willing to listen and to learn. He or she is never too proud or too busy to learn. They listen in order to understand. God gives grace to those who hunger for his word that they may understand his will and have the strength to live according to it. The "evil one" refers to Satan who also tempts us with sowing his evil seed in our hearts and minds. The evil one can also refer to those among us who promote ways that are contrary to that of Christ – those who embrace contrary ways of living, far from the way that God has commanded and Christ has taught. Do you embrace the laws of God and the teachings of Christ and His Church? Or do you embrace the ways of the evil one, public opinion, the politically correct, that which may be popular, that which may be civilly legal yet immoral in the eyes of God, and anything that is contrary to the truths of sacred scripture?

**Prayer ~ Saint Peter Chrysologus:** O God, who made the Bishop Saint Peter Chrysologus an outstanding preacher of your incarnate Word, grant, through his intercession, that we may constantly ponder in our hearts the mysteries of your salvation and faithfully express them in what we do. 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.

**Prayer ~ Blessed Solanus Casey:** O God, who in your providence conformed Blessed Solanus Casey to the image of your Son making him tireless in service to the poor, by his intercession and example, grant also to us the same generosity and joy in giving of ourselves in service to our neighbor. 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.

**Contemplation:** Don't be naive. An enemy exists who seeks to destroy the good seed of His word before it can bear fruit. Both good and evil can be sown in our hearts like tiny seeds which germinate, and in due time yield a harvest of good or bad fruit. We must stand guard lest evil take root in our hearts and corrupt us. In the day of judgment each will reap what he or she has sown in this life. Those who sow good will shine in the kingdom of their Father. They will radiate with the beauty, joy, and fullness of God's love.

**About Blessed Solanus Casey:** Barney Casey became one of Detroit's best-known priests even though he was not allowed to preach formally or to hear confessions! Barney came from a large family in Oak Grove, Wisconsin. At the age of 21, and after he had worked as a logger, a hospital orderly, a streetcar operator, and a prison guard, he entered St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee—where he found the studies difficult. He left there, and in 1896, joined the Capuchins in Detroit, taking the name Solanus. His studies for the priesthood were again arduous. On July 24, 1904, Solanus was ordained, but because his knowledge of theology was judged to be weak, he was not given permission to hear confessions or to preach. A Franciscan Capuchin who knew him well said this annoying restriction "brought forth in him a greatness and a holiness that might never have been realized in any other way." During his 14 years as porter and sacristan in Yonkers, New York, the people there recognized Solanus as a fine speaker. James Derum, his biographer writes, "For, though he was forbidden to deliver doctrinal sermons, he could give inspirational talks, or *feverinos*, as the Capuchins termed them." His spiritual fire deeply impressed his listeners. Father Solanus served at parishes in Manhattan and Harlem before returning to Detroit, where he was porter and sacristan for 20 years at St. Bonaventure Monastery. Every Wednesday afternoon he conducted well-attended services for the sick. A co-worker estimates that on the average day 150 to 200 people came to see Father Solanus in the front office. Most of them came to receive his blessing; 40 to 50 came for consultation. Many people considered him instrumental in cures and other blessings they received. The many friends of Father Solanus helped the Capuchins begin a soup kitchen during the Depression. Capuchins are still feeding the hungry there today. In failing health, Solanus was transferred

to the Capuchin novitiate in Huntington, Indiana, in 1946, where he lived for ten years until needing to be hospitalized in Detroit. Father Solanus died on July 31, 1957. An estimated 20,000 people passed by his coffin before his burial in St. Bonaventure Church in Detroit. At the funeral Mass, the provincial Father Gerald said: "His was a life of service and love for people like me and you. When he was not himself sick, he nevertheless suffered with and for you that were sick. When he was not physically hungry, he hungered with people like you. He had a divine love for people. He loved people for what he could do for them—and for God, through them." In 1960, a Father Solanus Guild was formed in Detroit to aid Capuchin seminarians. By 1967, the guild had 5,000 members—many of them grateful recipients of his practical advice and his comforting assurance that God would not abandon them in their trials. Solanus Casey was declared Venerable in 1995, and beatified on November 18, 2017.

**Visit the Solanus Casey Center in Detroit, Michigan: <https://www.solanuscasy.org/>.**

### **Wednesday, July 31 ~ Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Priest; Founder, Society of Jesus**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 13:44-46** Jesus said to his disciples: "The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the Kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it."

**Meditation:** Discovering God's kingdom is like stumbling across hidden treasure or finding the one pearl of great price. When we discover the kingdom of God we receive the greatest possible treasure — the Lord himself. Selling all that we have to obtain this incomparable treasure could mean many things — our friends, job, our "style of life", what we do with our free time. Treasure has a special connection to the heart, the place of desire and longing, the place of will and focus. The thing we most set our heart on is our highest treasure. In this parable what does the treasure of the kingdom refer to? It certainly refers to the kingdom of God in all its aspects. But in a special way, the Lord himself is the treasure we seek. If the Almighty is your gold and your precious silver, then you will delight yourself in the Almighty (Job 22:22-23). Is the Lord the treasure and delight of your heart?

**Prayer:** O God, who raised up Saint Ignatius of Loyola in your Church to further the greater glory of your name, grant that by his help we may imitate him in fighting the good fight on earth and merit to receive with him a crown 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:** What do you treasure most and how do you keep it secure? In a peasant community the best safe was often the earth. The man in the parable "went in his joy" to sell everything. Why? Because he found a treasure worth possessing above everything else he had. He did not, however, have enough to buy the treasure. Fortunately, he only needed enough money to buy the field. In a similar fashion, God offers his kingdom as incomparable treasure at a price we can afford! We can't pay the full price for the life which God gives us. But when we exchange our life for the life which God offers, we receive a treasure beyond compare. So what is of greater value, then? The treasure of this earthly life? Or the treasure that God makes available to us — the Lord himself!

### **Thursday, August 1 ~ Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time St. Alphonsus Liguori, Bishop, Doctor of the Church; Founder, Redemptorists**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 13:47-53** Jesus said to the disciples: "The Kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. Do you understand all these things?" They answered, "Yes." And he replied, "Then every scribe who has been instructed in the Kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old." When Jesus finished these parables, he went away from there.

**Meditation:** What can a story of a dragnet and a great catch of fish tell us about God's kingdom? The two most common ways of fishing in Jesus' time was with a casting-net (or hand-net) which was thrown from the shore and the drag-net or trawl which was let down or cast into the waters from a boat. As the boat moved through the waters the drag-net was drawn into the shape of a great cone which indiscriminately took in all kinds of fish and flotsam and jetsam swept in its path. It usually took several men to haul such a net to shore. What is Jesus' point here? Just as a drag-net catches every kind of fish in the sea, so the church acts as God's instrument for gathering in all who will come. Just as the drag-net does not or cannot

discriminate, so the church does not discriminate between the good and the bad, the useless and the useful. God's kingdom is open to all who will accept and believe. But there will come a time of separation, at the close of the age, when the angels will send the good and the bad to their respective destinations.

**Prayer:** O God, who constantly raise up in your Church new examples of virtue, grant that we may follow so closely in the footsteps of the Bishop Saint Alphonsus in his zeal for souls as to attain the same rewards that are his 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:** What is our duty in all of this? Our duty is rather simple – to gather in all who will come. God, in the end, will give the good and the bad the reward they deserve. God offers the treasure of his kingdom to all who believe. Do you hunger for God and his kingdom?

## Friday, August 2 ~ Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time

### Saint Peter Julian Eymard, Priest; Founder, Congregation of the Bl. Sacrament

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 13:54-58** Jesus came to his native place and taught the people in their synagogue. They were astonished and said, "Where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds? Is he not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother named Mary and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? Are not his sisters all with us? Where did this man get all this?" And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and in his own house." And he did not work many mighty deeds there because of their lack of faith.

**Meditation:** Are you critical towards others, especially those who are close to you? The most severe critics are often people very familiar to us, a member of our family, a relative, neighbor, student, or worker we rub shoulders with on a regular basis. Jesus faced a severe testing when he returned to his home town, not simply as the carpenter's son, but now as a rabbi with disciples. But it was of not matter, as the people of Nazareth took offense at him and refused to listen to what he had to say. They despised his preaching because he was a carpenter from the working class, and a mere layman untrained by religious scholars. They also despised him because of his family background. After all, Joseph was a tradesman as well and Mary had no special social distinctions.

**Prayer:** O God, who adorned Saint Peter Julian Eymard with a wonderful love for the sacred mysteries of the Body and Blood of your Son, graciously grant that we, too, may be worthy to receive the delights he drew from this divine banquet. 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:** How easily familiarity breeds contempt. Jesus could do no mighty works in his hometown because the people who were familiar with him were closed-minded and despised his claim to speak and act in the name of God. The Lord Jesus offers us freedom from sin, prejudice, contempt, and fear. His love and grace sets us free to love others with the same grace and mercy which he has shown to us. Only Jesus can truly set us free from the worst tyranny possible — slavery to sin and the fear of death. His victory on the cross brings us pardon and healing, and the grace to live holy lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. Do you know the joy and freedom which Christ's love brings to our hearts?

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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### MONTH OF AUGUST ~ PRAYER TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

*Immaculate Heart of Mary, my Mother, I come to you in childlike prayer. I earnestly desire that all the people of the world may be brought back to the humble knowledge and love of the Sacred Heart of your dear Son. I pray, dear Mother of my God, that the wonderful beauty and purity of your own Immaculate Heart may so win our souls that we may detest all sin and dedicate our lives to the honor and glory of the God who created us.*

*You revealed the secrets of your own sad heart at Fatima and begged for penance, prayer, and conversion of the world to God. What more can I do than unite my heart to yours in this great yearning? What can I add but the fervent prayer that all the world may listen to your pleading?*

*I give my heart to you, my heavenly Queen, and in confidence I leave to you what is best for me in answer to my prayer for love and reparation. Immaculate Heart of the Mother of my God, I implore through your powerful intercession, the conversion of the hearts of men, complete victory over sin, and the return of the peace which you have promised. Amen.*