

# 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 December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception*

***"Let us prepare ourselves for His Kingdom, let us welcome it. The little child, Jesus of Nazareth, will lead us! He who placed himself in our hands, from the night of His birth to the dark hour of His death on the cross, shines upon our history as the rising Sun. A new day has begun: let us arise and walk in His light!" +POPE LEO XIV, ANGELUS, DEC. 7, 2025***

### **Monday, December 22 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Advent**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 1:46-56** Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. for he has looked upon his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, and has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever."

Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months and then returned to her home.

**Meditation:** Mary accepted her mission with uncompromising faith and obedience. She acted with unwavering trust and faith because she believed that God would fulfill the word he had spoken. Her great hymn of praise echoes the song of Hannah (see 1 Samuel 2:1-10) and proclaims the favor of the Lord: God exalts the lowly and he fills the hungry with good things. Hannah like Mary had been without child and God in a marvelous way gave her a son, named Samuel, whom she dedicated at an early age to the service of the Lord (1 Sam. 1:24ff.) Mary, too, would lose her son to a servant ministry that would take him to the cross. Christmas is a time for renewing our faith and hope in God and in his promises and for deepening our love for God and for neighbor.

**Prayer:** O God, who, seeing the human race fallen into death, willed to redeem it by the coming of your Only Begotten Son, grant, we pray, that those who confess his Incarnation with humble fervor may merit his company as their Redeemer. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Those who hunger for the Lord will not be disappointed. The Lord himself will fill them with the fruits of his peace, joy, and righteousness. We see God's boundless love manifested in the promise of a Redeemer. As the events leading to the birth of our Savior unfold we see all the prophecies, promises and prayers of the Old Testament being fulfilled because "God so loved the world that he gave us his only Son" (John 3:16). The Gospel of Luke reveals the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in Mary's life. When Elizabeth and Mary greeted one another, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and with a joyful anticipation of the fulfillment of God's promise to give a Savior. John the Baptist, even before the birth of the Messiah, pointed to his coming and leapt for joy in the womb of his mother as the Holy Spirit revealed to him the presence of the King to be born. The Holy Spirit is God's gift to us to enable us to know and experience the way in which God reigns within each of us.

### **Tuesday, December 23 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Advent**

#### **Optional Memorial: Saint John of Kanty, Priest**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 1:57-66** When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name." So they made signs, asking his father

what he wished him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be? For surely the hand of the Lord was with him."

**Meditation:** Are you surprised to see the relatives of Zechariah and Elizabeth quibble over what to name their newborn child? Don't we do the same thing? This child, however, has been named from above! And Elizabeth is firm in her faith and determined to see that God be glorified through this child. The name John means "the Lord is gracious." In the birth of John and in the birth of Jesus the Messiah we see the grace of God breaking forth into a world broken by sin and death and without hope. John's miraculous birth shows the mercy and favor of God in preparing his people for the coming of its Lord and Savior, the Christ.

**Prayer:** Grant, we pray, almighty God, that by the example of the Priest Saint John of Kanty we may advance in knowledge of holy things and by showing compassion to all, may gain forgiveness in your sight. 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 God acts to save us he graciously fills us with his Holy Spirit and makes our faith "alive" to his promises. Do you make your life an offering to God, along with your family, and all that you possess? God wants to fill us with his glory all the days of our lives, from birth through death. Renew the offering of your life to God and give him thanks for his mercy and favor towards you?

### **Wednesday, December 24 ~ Fourth Week in the Season of Advent**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 1:67-69** Zechariah his father, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied, saying:

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; for he has come to his people and set them free. He has raised up for us a mighty Savior, born of the house of his servant David. Through his prophets he promised of old that he would save us from our enemies, from the hands of all who hate us. He promised to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant. This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to set us free from the hand of our enemies, free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life. You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace."

**Meditation:** The Holy Spirit gave Zechariah a vision for his own son as a prophet and forerunner who would prepare the way for the Messiah. Every devout Jew longed for the day when the Messiah would come. Now Zechariah knows beyond a doubt that that day is very near. Like Zechariah, the Holy Spirit wants to give us vision, joy, and confidence in the knowledge of God's merciful love, protection, and care which he offers us through his Son Jesus Christ. Like the Baptist, we too are called to prepare the way that leads to Christ. Life is a journey, and we are either moving towards the Lord or away from the Lord. The Lord comes to visit us each day with his life-giving Word and Spirit. Those who hunger for the Lord will not be disappointed. He will draw us to himself and show us his unbounded love and mercy.

**Prayer:** Come quickly, we pray, Lord Jesus, and do not delay, that those who trust in your compassion may find solace and relief in your coming. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Does the proclamation of the gospel fill you with joy and hope? When the Lord comes to redeem us he fills us with his Holy Spirit, the source of our joy and hope in the promises of God. John the Baptist was born shortly before Mary delivered her son, Jesus. When John was circumcised on the eighth day according to the Jewish rite, his father Zechariah was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and with great joy. Inspired by the Holy Spirit he spoke out a prophetic word and hymn of blessing for the work of redemption which God was about to accomplish in Christ. He foresaw the fulfillment of God's promise to David and his descendants that David's dynasty would endure forever through the coming of the Messianic King (2 Samuel 7:16). This King would establish peace and security for his people. We often think of peace as the absence of trouble. The peace which the Messiah brings cancels the debt of our sins and restores our broken relationship with God.

### **Thursday, December 25 ~ Christmas Day The Birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 2:1-14** In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be

enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

**From a Sermon by Pope Saint Leo the Great:** Dearly beloved, today our Savior is born; let us rejoice! Sadness should have no place on the birthday of life. The fear of death has been swallowed up; life brings us joy with the promise of eternal happiness. No one is shut out from this joy; all share the same reason for rejoicing. Our Lord, victor over sin and death, finding no man free from sin, came to free us all. Let the saint rejoice as he sees the palm of victory at hand. Let the sinner be glad as he receives the offer of forgiveness. Let the pagan take courage as he is summoned to life. In the fullness of time, chosen in the unfathomable depths of God's wisdom, the Son of God took for himself our common humanity in order to reconcile it with its creator. He came to overthrow the devil, the origin of death, in that very nature by which he had overthrown mankind. And so at the birth of our Lord the angels sing in joy: Glory to God in the highest, and they proclaim peace to men of good will as they see the heavenly Jerusalem being built from all the nations of the world. When the angels on high are so exultant at this marvelous work of God's goodness, what joy should it not bring to the lowly hearts of men? Beloved, let us give thanks to God the Father, through his Son, in the Holy Spirit, because in his great love for us he took pity on us, and when we were dead in our sins he brought us to life with Christ, so that in him we might be a new creation. Let us throw off our old nature and all its ways and, as we have come to birth in Christ, let us renounce the works of the flesh. Christian, remember your dignity, and now that you share in God's own nature, do not return by sin to your former base condition. Bear in mind who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Do not forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of God's kingdom. Through the sacrament of baptism you have become a temple of the Holy Spirit. Do not drive away so great a guest by evil conduct and become again a slave to the devil, for your liberty was bought by the blood of Christ. [From the *Office of Readings* for Christmas Day]

**Christmas Thoughts of Father Thomas Merton, OCSO:** "The mystery of Christmas therefore lays upon us all a debt and an obligation to the rest of the human race and to the whole created universe. We who have seen the light of Christ are obliged by the greatness of the grace that has been given us to make known the presence of the Savior to the ends of the earth. This we will do not only by preaching the glad tidings of his coming, but above all by revealing him in our lives. Christ is born to us in order that he may appear to the whole world through us."

**Prayer:** O God, who gladden us year by year as we wait in hope for our redemption grant that, just as we joyfully welcome your Only Begotten Son as our Redeemer, we may also merit to face him confidently when he comes again as our Judge. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.



**Contemplation:** Christians never cease proclaiming anew the wonder of the Incarnation. The Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it. The Son of God worked with human hands; he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin (*Gaudium et Spes*). If we are going to behold the glory of God we will do it through Jesus Christ. Jesus became the partaker of our humanity so we could be partakers of his divinity (2 Peter 1:4). God's purpose for us, even from the beginning of his creation, is that we would be fully united with Him. When Jesus comes, God is made known as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." By our being united in Jesus, God becomes our Father and we become his sons and daughters.

## **Friday, December 26 ~ Second Day in the Octave of Christmas**

### **Feast of Saint Stephen, Martyr**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 10:17-22** Jesus said to his disciples: "Beware of men, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved."

**Meditation:** What is the connection between Bethlehem and Calvary – the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ and his passion and death on a cross? The very reason the Son of God took on flesh and became a man for our sake was to redeem us from slavery to sin and death and to give us new life as the adopted children of God. The way to glory in the kingdom of God is through the cross. If we want to share in Jesus' glory, then we, too, must take up our cross each day and follow in his footsteps. Jesus never hesitated to tell his disciples what they might expect if they followed him. Here Jesus says to his disciples: This is my task for you at its grimmest and worst; do you accept it? This is not the world's way of offering a job. This is not the message we prefer to hear when the Lord commissions us in his service. Nonetheless, our privilege is to follow in the footsteps of the Master who laid down his life for us. The Lord gives us sufficient grace to follow him and to bear our cross with courage and hope.

**Prayer:** Grant, Lord, we pray, that we may imitate what we worship, and so learn to love even our enemies, for we celebrate the heavenly birthday of a man who know how to pray even for his persecutors. 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:** Today's Gospel is tied into this scene we leave with Stephen's death as Jesus tells us to beware of men who will hand you over to courts, governors and kings for His sake. Then he says "When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say" (Matthew 10:19). Reading these words makes one recall the words that Stephen spoke on his death bed. Witnesses say he was radiating. It is this model of our saints that can be somewhat frightening to imagine. Could we possibly endure this pain and suffering because of our Faith? The Gospel suggests that Stephen might have been removed from the pain and suffering because he put his trust in the Lord; we cannot know for certain. His consent to allow the Holy Spirit to dwell in him was a good indication of the strength of his prayer life. So, just one day past the celebration of Christ's Birth, we are reminded why Jesus came. Let us pray for strength for the journey. We do not know that we may be called upon to defend our Faith; as was passed on by Saint Stephen. As he was able, let us also be ready to receive our instruction. If we are listeners of the Word, we can be doers of the Word as well. Jesus said "You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

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*Abundant Blessings for a Joyous and Merry Christmas!*