

# 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 May is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

***“The holy and inspired Scriptures are sufficient of themselves for the preaching of the truth.” ~SAINT ATHANASIUS***

**Monday, April 29 ~ Fifth Week in the Season of Easter  
Saint Catherine of Siena, Virgin, Doctor of the Church**

**Holy Gospel: John 14:21-26** Jesus said to his disciples: “Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.” Judas, not the Iscariot, said to him, “Master, then what happened that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me. “I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.”

**Meditation:** God’s love for each of us is as real and tangible as the love of a mother for her child and the love of a lover who gives all for his beloved. God made us for love – to know him personally and to grow in the knowledge of his great love for us. How can we know and be assured of the love of God? The Holy Spirit helps us to grow in the knowledge of God and his great love. The Spirit enables us to experience the love of God and to be assured of the Lord’s abiding presence with us (see Romans 8:35-39). The Holy Spirit also opens our ears to hear and understand the word of God. Do you listen attentively to God’s word and believe it? Ask the Holy Spirit to inflame your heart with the love of God and his word.

**Prayer:** O God, who set Saint Catherine of Siena on fire with divine love in her contemplation of the Lord’s Passion and her service to your Church, grant, through her intercession, that your people, participating in the mystery of Christ, may ever exult in the revelation of his glory. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Do you know the love that surpasses all, and that love is stronger than death itself (ref. Song of Songs 8:6)? In Jesus’ last supper discourse he speaks of the love he has for his disciples and of his Father’s love. He prepares his disciples for his imminent departure to return to his Father by exhorting them to prove their love for him through their loyalty and obedience to his word. He promises them the abiding instruction and consolation of the Holy Spirit. Saint Augustine says “the Lord loves each of us as if there were only one of us to love.”

**Tuesday, April 30 ~ Fifth Week in the Season of Easter  
Optional Memorial: Saint Pius V, Pope**

**Holy Gospel: John 14:27-31a** Jesus said to his disciples: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, ‘I am going away and I will come back to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe. I will no longer speak much with you, for the ruler of the world is coming. He has no power over me, but the world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me.”

**Meditation:** Nothing can take us from the peace and joy of Jesus Christ. No sorrow or grief, no danger, no suffering can make it less. Jesus also speaks of his destination and ultimate triumph over the powers of evil in the world. In the eyes of the world the cross stood for shame, humiliation, and defeat. Jesus went to the cross knowing that it would lead to victory over the powers of sin and of Satan. Jesus also knew

that he would return to his Father in glory. The cross brought glory to Jesus and to the Father and it is our way to glory as well. In the Cross of Christ we find true peace and reconciliation with God. Do you live in the peace of Jesus Christ?

**Prayer:** O God, who restore us to eternal life in the Resurrection of Christ, grant your people constancy in faith and hope, that we may never doubt the promises of which we have learned from you. 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 his farewell discourse, Jesus Christ grants peace as his gift to his disciples. What kind of peace does he offer? The peace of Christ is more than the absence of trouble. It includes everything which makes for our attaining the highest good. The world's approach to peace is avoidance of trouble and a refusal to face unpleasant things – and a growing aspiration to embrace a life of “political correctness” as opposed to embracing what is right and good and true according to living our lives according to God’s will and Christ’s teachings. Jesus offers the one true peace which conquers all of our fears and anxieties. Do you seek his peace before other sources of peace which are fleeting at best?

### **Wednesday, May 1 ~ Fifth Week in the Season of Easter Saint Joseph the Worker**

**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:** The liturgy for this feast vindicates the right to work, and this is a message that needs to be heard and heeded in our modern society. In many of the documents issued by Pope Saint John XXIII, Pope Blessed Paul VI, the Second Vatican Council and Pope Saint John Paul II, reference is made to the Christian spirit that should permeate one's work, after the example of Saint Joseph, recognizing that all of our gifts and talents are gifts to us from God, and should be used to help build up His kingdom here on earth. In addition to this, there is a special dignity and value to the work done in caring for the human family.

**Prayer:** O God, Creator of all things, who laid down for the human race the law of work, graciously grant that by the example of Saint Joseph and under his patronage we may complete the works you set us to do and attain the rewards you promise. 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:** Worth contemplating on this Feast is a brief excerpt from a document of the Second Vatican Council “The Church in the Modern World” – *Gaudium et Spes* – which notes: “Throughout the course of the centuries, men have labored to better the circumstances of their lives through a monumental amount of individual and collective effort. To believers, this point is settled: considered in itself, this human activity accords with God's will. For man, created to God's image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness; a mandate to relate himself and the totality of things to Him Who was to be acknowledged as the Lord and Creator of all. Thus, by the subjection of all things to man, the name of God would be wonderful in all the earth” (No. 34).

**About Saint Joseph the Worker:** “May Day” has long been dedicated to labor and the working man. It falls on the first day of the month that is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Pope Pius XII expressed the hope that this feast would accentuate the dignity of labor and would bring a spiritual dimension to labor unions. It is eminently fitting that St. Joseph, a working man who became the foster-father of Christ and patron of the universal Church, should be honored on this day. The texts of the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours provide a catechetical synthesis of the significance of human labor seen in the light of faith. The Opening Prayer states that God, the creator and ruler of the universe, has called men and women in every age to develop and use their talents for the good of others. The Office of Readings, taken from the document of the Second Vatican Council on the Church in the modern world, develops this idea. In every type of labor we are obeying the command of God given in Genesis 2:15 and repeated in the responsory for the Office of Readings. The responsory for the Canticle of Zechariah says that “St. Joseph faithfully practiced the carpenter's trade. He is a shining example for all workers.” Then, in the second part of the Opening Prayer, we ask that we may do the work that God has asked of us and come to the rewards he

has promised. In the Prayer after Communion we ask: "May our lives manifest your love; may we rejoice for ever in your peace." The liturgy for this feast vindicates the right to work, and this is a message that needs to be heard and heeded in our modern society. In many of the documents issued by Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI, the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II, reference is made to the Christian spirit that should permeate one's work, after the example of St. Joseph. In addition to this, there is a special dignity and value to the work done in caring for the family. The Office of Readings contains an excerpt from the Vatican II document on the modern world: "Where men and women, in the course of gaining a livelihood for themselves and their families, offer appropriate service to society, they can be confident that their personal efforts promote the work of the Creator, confer benefits on their fellowmen, and help to realize God's plan in history" (no. 34).

### **Thursday, May 2 ~ Fifth Week in the Season of Easter Saint Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor of the Church**

**Holy Gospel: John 15:9-11** Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. "I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete."

**Meditation:** Do you know first-hand the love that produces immeasurable joy? Jesus speaks of the love which the Father and he have for those who belong to him. We can never out give God in love, because he has loved us without measure. Our love for him is a response to his exceeding mercy and kindness towards us. Paul the Apostle tells us that we can abound in joy and hope because "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Romans 5:5). In God's love we find the fullness of grace, life, peace, and joy. Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment – a new way of love. We are to love others as Jesus has loved us.

**Prayer:** Almighty ever-living God, who raised up the Bishop Saint Athanasius as an outstanding champion of your Son's divinity, mercifully grant, that, rejoicing in his teaching and his protection, we may never cease to grow in knowledge and love of you. 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 the essence of this new commandment? True love is sacrificial. It gives all to the beloved. And there is no greater proof in love than the sacrifice of one's life for the sake of another. Jesus proved his love for his disciples by giving his life for them, even to death on the cross. We prove our love for God and for one another when we embrace the way of the cross. What is the cross in my life? When my will crosses with God's will, then God's will must be done. Do you know the joy and contentment of a life fully surrendered to God and consumed with his love?

### **Friday, May 3 ~ Fifth Week in the Season of Easter Feast of Saints Philip and James, Apostles**

**Holy Gospel: John 14:6-14** Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father. And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it."

**Meditation:** What's the greatest thing we can aim for in our brief earthly life? Fame? Riches? Power? The greatest thing we can aim for is to know, love and serve God. What is the best thing we can possess in this life, bringing more joy, contentment, life and happiness, than anything else? Knowledge of God! *Thus says the Lord:* "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me" (Jeremiah 9:23-24). One of the greatest truths of the Christian faith is that we can know the *living* God. Our knowledge of God is not simply limited to knowing something about God, but we can know God personally. The essence of Christianity, and what makes it distinct from Judaism and other religions, is the

personal knowledge of God as our Father – the one who created us out of love, and who out of love for us sent his only son into this world – Jesus Christ – to save and redeem us.

**Prayer:** O God, who gladden us each year with the feast day of the Apostles Philip and James, grant us, through their prayers, a share in the Passion and Resurrection of your Only Begotten Son, so that we may merit to behold you for eternity. 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:** In Jesus we see the perfect love of God – a God who cares intensely and who yearns over men and women, loving them to the point of laying down his life for them upon the Cross. Jesus is the revelation of God – a God who loves us unconditionally – without reservation, unselfishly – for our sake and not his, and perfectly – without neglecting or forgetting us even for a brief moment. Jesus promises that God the Father will hear our prayers when we pray in his name. That is why Jesus taught his followers to pray with confidence, "*Our Father who art in heaven...give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses...*" (Matthew 6:9-11; Luke 11:2-3). Do you pray to your Father in heaven with joy and confidence in his genuine love and care for you?

### **Saturday, May 4 ~ Fifth Week in the Season of Easter**

**Holy Gospel: John 15:18-21** Jesus said to his disciples: "If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you, 'No slave is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. And they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me."

**Meditation:** When Jesus says "you are not of this world" many are initially confused by what this means. The "world" in scripture refers to that society of people who are hostile towards God and opposed to his will. The world rejected Jesus, and his disciples can expect the same treatment. Jesus leaves no middle ground for his followers. We are either for him or against him, for his kingdom of light or for the kingdom of darkness. The prophet Isaiah warned that people who separate themselves from God because of their rebellion and spiritual blindness would end up calling evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20).

**Prayer:** Almighty and eternal God, who through the regenerating power of Baptism have been pleased to confer on us heavenly life, grant, we pray, that those you render capable of immortality by justifying them may by your guidance attain the fullness of 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:** If we want to live in the light of God's truth, how can we rightly distinguish good from evil? True love of God and his ways draw us to all that is lovely, truthful and good. If we truly love God then we will submit to his truth and will for our lives. A friend of God cannot expect to be a friend of the world because the world opposes God. Jesus' demand is unequivocal and without compromise. Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15). We must make a choice either for or against God. Do you seek to please God in all your thoughts, actions, and relationships? Let the Holy Spirit fill your heart with the love of God (Romans 5:5).

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops;  
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#### **PRAYER OF POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

*O Mother, you know the sufferings and hopes of the Church and the world:  
come to the aid of your children in the daily trials which life brings to each one,  
and grant that, thanks to the efforts of all, the darkness will not prevail over the light.*

*To you, Dawn of Salvation, we commit our journey through this new Millennium,  
so that with you as guide all people may know Christ, the light of the world and its only Savior,  
Who reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.*