

# 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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*Jubilee Year 2025: Pilgrims of Hope*  
*The Month of April is dedicated to the Holy Spirit*  
*The Month of May is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary*

***"[Let] the greatest sinners place their trust in My mercy. They have the right before others to trust in the abyss of My mercy. My daughter, write about My mercy towards tormented souls. Souls that make an appeal to My mercy delight Me. To such souls I grant even more graces than they ask. I cannot punish even the greatest sinner if he makes an appeal to My compassion, but on the contrary, I justify him in My unfathomable and inscrutable mercy. Write: before I come as a just Judge, I first open wide the door of My mercy. He who refuses to pass through the door of My mercy must pass through the door of My justice."*** ~JESUS SPEAKING TO SAINT FAUSTINA KOWALSKA

### **Monday, April 28 ~ Second Week in the Season of Easter**

**Optional Memorials of St. Peter Chanel, Priest & Martyr; St. Louis Mary de Montfort, Priest**

**Holy Gospel: John 3:1-8** There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother's womb and be born again, can he?" Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born of water and Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

**Meditation:** Notice how hungry Nicodemus was for God's word – so hungry that he became the closest disciple of Jesus. He sought Jesus out, though surreptitiously in the dead of the night. Why? Nicodemus was a "leader of the Jews" and "a teacher of Israel" (ref. John 3:10), and a member of the religious party most opposed to the teaching of Jesus. In fact it was Nicodemus' own group, the Pharisees, which intimidated the authorities against confessing Jesus (ref. John 12:42). Instead he engaged him in a seemingly unrelated topic of conversation. Jesus said that rebirth was necessary to enter the kingdom of God. Of course, Nicodemus the Pharisee had already found religion, so he thought that Jesus must have referred to physical rebirth. No, Jesus responded, someone who is reborn spiritually knows the experience as surely as one who has been refreshed by an invisible breeze. How can a respected rabbi among the Jews not know this? And that is precisely the point. Nicodemus is the first of what we might loosely call the official clergy with whom Jesus has personal engagement.

**Prayer:** Grant we pray, almighty God, that we, who have been renewed by Paschal remedies, transcending the likeness of our earthly parentage, may be transformed in the image of our heavenly maker. 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:** We're familiar with the term "born again" or to be "reborn" in Christ. What does it mean? The new birth Jesus speaks of is a spiritual birth to new life and relationship with God as his sons and daughters. This new birth is made possible when one is baptized into Christ and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. God wants to renew all his people in the gift of new life in his Holy Spirit. This new life brings us into God's kingdom or heavenly rule – a never-ending life of love, peace, joy, and freedom from sin and the fear of death. Do you know the joy and freedom of new life in Jesus Christ?

**Tuesday, April 29 ~ Second Week in the Season of Easter**  
**Memorial: Saint Catharine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor of the Church**

**Holy Gospel: John 3:7b-15** Jesus said to Nicodemus: "'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to him, 'How can this happen?' Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel and you do not understand this? Amen, amen, I say to you, we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you people do not accept our testimony. If I tell you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

**Meditation:** Jesus spoke to Nicodemus of the power of his cross and a "new birth in the Spirit." The Hebrew word for "spirit" means both "wind" and "breath." Jesus said to Nicodemus: "You can hear, feel, and see the effects of the wind, but you do not know where it comes from. In like manner, you can see the effects of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those the Spirit touches." Jesus was explaining to Nicodemus the necessity of the crucifixion and resurrection by analogy with Moses and the bronze serpent in the desert. When the people of Israel were afflicted with serpents in the wilderness because of their sin, God instructed Moses: "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live" (Book of Numbers 21:8).

**Prayer:** O God, who set Saint Catharine 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:** The bronze serpent points to the cross of Christ which defeats sin and death and obtains everlasting life for those who believe. The result of Jesus "being lifted up on the cross" and his rising and exaltation to the Father's right hand in heaven, is our "new birth in the Spirit" and adoption as sons and daughters of God. God not only redeems us, but he fills us with his own divine life and power that we might share in his glory. Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit that we may have power to be his witnesses and to spread and defend the gospel by word and action, and to never be ashamed of the Cross of Christ. The Holy Spirit gives us his seven-fold gifts of wisdom and understanding, right judgment and courage, knowledge and reverence for God and his ways, and a holy fear in God's presence (ref. Isaiah 11) that we may live for God and serve him in the power of his strength. Christ came to serve, not to be served. Do you lovingly serve others as Christ served us?

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

**Holy Gospel: John 3:16-21** God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

**Meditation:** Do you know the love which surpasses all else? A true lover holds nothing back but gives the best that can be offered, even everything in their possession for the beloved. God proved his love for us by giving us the best he had to offer – his only begotten Son who freely gave himself as an offering to God for our sake and as the atoning sacrifice for our sin and the sin of the world. Abraham's willing sacrifice of his only son, Isaac prefigures the perfect offering and sacrifice of God's beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This passage in the gospel of John tells us of the great breadth and width of God's love. Not an excluding love for just a few or for a single nation, but a redemptive love that embraces the whole world, and a personal love for each and every individual whom God has created. God is a loving Father who cannot rest until his wandering children have returned home to him. Saint Augustine says, God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love. God gives us the freedom to choose whom and what we will love – let's pray that we use that freedom wisely.

**Prayer:** As we recall year by year the mysteries by which, through the restoration of its original dignity, human nature has received the hope of rising again, we earnestly beseech your mercy, Lord, that what we celebrate in faith we may possess in unending love. 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 shows us the paradox of love and judgment. We can love the darkness of sin and unbelief or we can love the light of God's truth, beauty, and goodness. This all takes place by the choices we make – our "free will." If our love is guided by what is true, and good and beautiful then we will choose for God and love him above all else. What we love shows what we prefer. Do you love God above all else? Does he take first place in your life, in your thoughts, and actions? Are your choices guided by the love of God? If not, why not?

## **Thursday, May 1 ~ Second Week in the Season of Easter**

### **Saint Joseph the Worker**

**Holy Gospel: John 6:52-59** The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his Flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my Flesh is true food, and my Blood is true drink. Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever." These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

**Meditation:** Why did Jesus offer himself as "food and drink"? The Jews were scandalized and the disciples were divided when Jesus said "unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you." What a hard saying, unless you understand who Jesus is and why he calls himself the bread of life. The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, when Jesus said the blessing, broke and distributed the loaves through his disciples to feed the multitude, prefigured the superabundance of the unique bread of the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper. The Gospel of John has no account of the Last Supper meal (just the foot washing ceremony and Jesus' farewell discourse). Instead, John quotes extensively from Jesus' teaching on the bread of life. In the Old Covenant bread and wine were offered in sacrifice as a sign of grateful acknowledgment to their Creator. Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine, who was both priest and king (Genesis 14:18), prefigured the offering made by Jesus, our high priest and king. The remembrance of the manna in the wilderness recalled to Israel that it lives by the bread of the Word of God (Deuteronomy 8:3). When at the Last Supper Jesus described his blood "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28), he was explaining his coming crucifixion as a sacrifice for sins. His death on the cross fulfilled the sacrifice of the paschal lamb. That is why John the Baptist called him the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

**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, one God, for ever and ever.

**Prayer to Saint Joseph for Employment:** Dear Saint Joseph, you were yourself once faced with the responsibility of providing the necessities of life for Jesus and Mary. Look down with fatherly compassion upon me in my anxiety with my present inability to support my family. Please help me find gainful employment very soon, so that this great burden of concern will be lifted from my heart and that I am soon able to provide for those whom God has entrusted to my care. Help me guard against discouragement, so that I may emerge from this trial spiritually enriched and with even greater blessings from God. Amen.

**Contemplation (in relation to today's feast):** Do you find yourself in need of prayer looking for work these days? The Prayer to Saint Joseph for Employment (above) is presented today in the hope it might provide some relief and comfort to those who find themselves in this situation. Do not despair! Seek this great Saint's help in carrying the vexing and at times quite bitter cross of being out of work, remembering always that you always have great worth in the eyes of God no matter what your situation may be.

**About today's Feast:** "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 Saint 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. 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. 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 Saint Joseph.

## **Friday, May 2 ~ Second Week in the Season of Easter**

### **Memorial: Saint Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor of the Church**

**Holy Gospel: John 6:1-15** John Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near. When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people recline." Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted." So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world." Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

**Meditation:** Can anything on this earth truly satisfy the deepest longing and hunger we experience God? A great multitude had gathered to hear Jesus, no doubt because they were hungry for the word of life. Jesus' disciples wanted to send them away at the end of the day because they did not have the resources to feed them. They even complained how much money it would take to feed such a crowd – at least six month's wages! Jesus, the Bread of Life, took the little they had – five loaves and two fish – and giving thanks to his heavenly Father, distributed to all until they were satisfied of their hunger. The miraculous feeding of such a great multitude pointed to God's provision of manna in the wilderness for the people of Israel under Moses' leadership. This food foreshadowed the true heavenly bread which Jesus would offer his followers. Jesus makes a claim only God can make: He is the true bread of heaven that can satisfy the deepest hunger we experience. The sign of the multiplication of the loaves when the Lord says the blessing, breaks and distributes through his disciples prefigures the superabundance of the unique bread of his Eucharist or Lord's Supper. When we receive from the Lord's table we unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, who makes us sharers in his sacred body and blood. Saint Ignatius of Antioch calls it the "one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ" (Ad Eph. 20,2).

**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:** The feeding of the five thousand shows the remarkable generosity of God and his great kindness towards us. When God gives, he gives abundantly. He gives more than we need for ourselves that we may have something to share with others, especially those who lack what they need. God takes the little we have and multiplies it for the good of others. Do you trust in God's provision for you? Do you share freely with others, especially those who lack even the most basic necessities? How about doing some spring cleaning and take what you're not using in your home (clean items in good condition, of course) and give them to any number of Catholic organizations reaching out to help those in need.

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