

# Lectio Divina

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

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*The month of July is dedicated to the Most Precious Blood of Jesus.*

***"Help those who are in trouble...console the afflicted...prefer nothing to the love of Christ...speak the truth from your heart as from your mouth...attribute the good that you find in yourself to God, not to yourself...desire eternal life with the ardor of your soul...honor those who are old...love those who are younger...listen willingly to the Holy Scriptures...never despair of the mercy of God."*** ~FROM THE RULE OF SAINT BENEDICT

## **Monday, July 8 ~ Fourteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 9:18-26** While Jesus was speaking, an official came forward, knelt down before him, and said, "My daughter has just died. But come, lay your hand on her, and she will live." Jesus rose and followed him, and so did his disciples. A woman suffering hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the tassel on his cloak. She said to herself, "If only I can touch his cloak, I shall be cured." Jesus turned around and saw her, and said, "Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you." And from that hour the woman was cured. When Jesus arrived at the official's house and saw the flute players and the crowd who were making a commotion, he said, "Go away! The girl is not dead but sleeping." And they ridiculed him. When the crowd was put out, he came and took her by the hand, and the little girl arose. And news of this spread throughout all that land.

**Meditation:** Jesus gave hope where there seemed to be no human cause for it because his hope was directed to God. He spoke words of hope to the woman (Take heart, daughter!) to ignite the spark of faith in her (your faith has made you well!). And he also gave divine hope to a father who had just lost a beloved child. It took considerable courage and risk for the ruler of a synagogue to openly go to Jesus and to invite the scorn of his neighbors and kin. Even the hired mourners laughed at him in scorn. Their grief was devoid of any hope. Nonetheless, Jesus took the girl by the hand and delivered her from the grasp of death. In both instances we see Jesus' personal concern for the needs of others and his readiness to heal and restore life.

**Prayer:** O God, who in the abasement of your Son have raised up a fallen world, fill your faithful with holy joy, for on those you have rescued from slavery to sin you bestow eternal gladness. 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 faced with the challenges of life, which often bring anxieties and fears, do you take your troubles to the Lord with expectant faith and confidence in his help? People in desperate or helpless circumstances were never disappointed when they sought Jesus. What drew them to Jesus? Was it hope for a miracle or a word of comfort in their affliction? What did the elderly woman who had suffered greatly for twelve years expect Jesus to do for her? And what did a grieving father expect Jesus to do about his lost beloved daughter?

## **Tuesday, July 9 ~ Fourteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time Saint Augustine Zhao Rong, Priest and Companions, Chinese Martyrs**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 9:32-38** A demoniac who could not speak was brought to Jesus, and when the demon was driven out the mute man spoke. The crowds were amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." But the Pharisees said, "He drives out demons by the prince of demons." Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

**Meditation:** Always interesting when Jesus' miracles could cause both scorn and wonder at the same time, especially from those who professed their faith in God. And yet, don't we sometimes encounter the same reaction today, even in ourselves! The crowds looked with awe at the wonderful works which Jesus did, but the religious leaders attributed this same work to the power of the devil. They disbelieved because they refused to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Their idea of religion was too narrow and closed to accept Jesus as the Anointed One sent by the Father "to set the captives free" (Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 11:5). They were too set in their own ways to change and they were too proud to submit to Jesus. They held too rigidly to the observances of their ritual laws while neglecting the more important duties of love of God and love of neighbor. The people, as a result, were spiritually adrift and hungry for God. Jesus met their need and gave them new faith and hope in God's saving help.

**Prayer:** O God, who in your wonderful providence have strengthened your Church through the confession of the Martyrs Saint Augustine Zhao and companions, grant that your people, faithful to the mission entrusted to it, may enjoy ever greater freedom and witness to the truth before the world. 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. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Whenever the gospel is read in the quiet of one's home or proclaimed, God's kingdom is made manifest and new life and freedom is given to those who respond with faith. The Lord grants freedom to all who turn to him with trust. Do you bring your troubles to the Lord with expectant faith that he can set you free? The Lord invites us to pray that the work of the gospel may spread throughout the world, so that all may find true joy and freedom in Jesus Christ.

**About Augustine Zhao Rong and Companions:** Christianity arrived in China by way of Syria in the 600s. Depending on China's relations with the outside world, Christianity over the centuries was free to grow or was forced to operate secretly. The 120 martyrs in this group died between 1648 and 1930. Most of them (eighty-seven) were born in China and were children, parents, catechists or laborers, ranging from nine years of age to seventy-two. This group includes four Chinese diocesan priests. The thirty-three foreign-born martyrs were mostly priests or women religious, especially from the Order of Preachers, the Paris Foreign Mission Society, the Friars Minor, Jesuits, Salesians and Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. Augustine Zhao Rong was a Chinese soldier who accompanied Bishop John Gabriel Taurin Dufresse (Paris Foreign Mission Society) to his martyrdom in Beijing. Augustine was baptized and not long after was ordained as a diocesan priest. He was martyred in 1815. Beatified in groups at various times, these 120 martyrs were canonized in Rome on October 1, 2000.

### **Wednesday, July 10 ~ Fourteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 10:1-7** Jesus summoned his Twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness. The names of the Twelve Apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. Jesus sent out these Twelve after instructing them thus, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, make this proclamation: 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

**Meditation:** Jesus commissioned his Apostles to carry on the works which he did – to speak God's word and to bring his healing power to the weary and oppressed. In the choice of the twelve Apostles we see a characteristic feature of God's work: Jesus chose very ordinary people. They were non-professionals, had no wealth or position. They were chosen from the common people who did ordinary things, had no special education, and no social advantages. Jesus wanted ordinary people who could take an assignment and do it extraordinarily well. He chose these men, not for what they were, but for what they would be capable of becoming under his direction and power. When the Lord calls us to serve, we must not think we have nothing to offer. The Lord takes what ordinary people, like us, can offer and uses it for greatness in his kingdom. Do you allow your God-given gifts, abilities and talents to be used by God for the building up of his kingdom here on earth?

**Prayer:** O God, who in the abasement of your Son have raised up a fallen world, fill your faithful with holy joy, for on those you have rescued from slavery to sin you bestow eternal gladness. 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 often forget that the core of the gospel message is quite simple: the kingdom (or reign) of God is imminent! What is the kingdom of God? It is that society of men and women who submit

to God and who honor him as their King and Lord. In the *Lord's Prayer* we pray for God to reign in our lives and in our world: May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus' preaching of God's kingdom was accompanied by signs and wonders. People were healed not only spiritually, but physically as well. Jesus' words are just as relevant today, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. We cannot buy heaven; but those who know the love and mercy of Jesus already possess heaven in their hearts! Do you believe in the power of God's kingdom?

**Thursday, July 11 ~ Fourteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time**  
**Saint Benedict of Nursia, Abbott**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 10:7-15** Jesus said to his Apostles: "As you go, make this proclamation: 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give. Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts; no sack for the journey, or a second tunic, or sandals, or walking stick. The laborer deserves his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, look for a worthy person in it, and stay there until you leave. As you enter a house, wish it peace. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; if not, let your peace return to you. Whoever will not receive you or listen to your words go outside that house or town and shake the dust from your feet. Amen, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town."

**Meditation:** Jesus said to his disciples: "Freely you have received, freely you shall give." What they have received from Jesus they must now pass on to others without expecting a favor in return, whether it be in form of a gift or payment. They must show by their attitude that their first interest is in serving God, not receiving material gain. They must serve without guile, full of charity and peace, and simplicity. They must give their full attention to the proclamation of God's kingdom and not be diverted by other lesser things. They must travel light – only take what was essential and leave behind whatever would distract them – in order to concentrate on the task of speaking the word of the God. They must do their work, not for what they can get out of it, but for what they can give freely to others, without expecting special privileges or reward. "Poverty of spirit" frees us from greed and preoccupation with possessions and makes ample room for God's provision. The Lord wants his disciples to be dependent on him and not on themselves.

**Prayer:** O God, who made the Abbot Saint Benedict an outstanding master in the school of divine service, grant, we pray, that, putting nothing before love of you, we may hasten with a loving heart in the way of your commands. 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. Amen.

**Saint Benedict's Prayer for Those Who Seek Faith:** Gracious and Holy Father, give us the wisdom to discover You, the intelligence to understand You, the diligence to seek after You, the patience to wait for You, eyes to behold You, a heart to meditate upon You, and a life to proclaim You, through the power of the Spirit of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

**Prayer of Saint Benedict to Seek and Find God:** God our Father, in Your goodness grant me the intellect to comprehend You, the perception to discern You, and the reason to appreciate You. In Your kindness endow me with the diligence to look for You, the wisdom to discover You, and the spirit to apprehend You. In Your graciousness bestow on me a heart to contemplate You, ears to hear You, eyes to see You, and a tongue to speak of You. In Your mercy to confer on me a conversation pleasing to You, the patience to wait for You, and the perseverance to long for You. Grant me a perfect end, Your holy presence. I ask this in the name of Your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer to Saint Benedict for Protection:** Dear Saint Benedict, I thank God for showering you with His grace to love Him above all else and to establish a monastic rule that has helped so many of His children live full and holy lives. Through the cross of Jesus Christ, I ask you to please intercede that God might protect me, my loved ones, my home, property, possessions, and workplace today and always by your holy blessing, that we may never be separated from Jesus, Mary, and the company of all the blessed. Through your intercession may we be delivered from temptation, spiritual oppression, physical ills, and disease. Protect us from drug and alcohol abuse, impurity and immorality, objectionable companions, and negative attitudes. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

**Contemplation:** There is a double truth when Jesus says: "the laborer deserves his keep." And the double truth is this. The worker of God must not be overly-concerned with material things, but the people of God must never fail in their duty to give the worker of God what he or she needs to sustain themselves in the Lord's service. Do you pray for the work of the gospel and do you support it with your material and financial resources? Jesus ends his instructions with a warning: If people reject God's invitation and refuse

his word, then they bring judgment and condemnation on themselves. When God gives us his word there comes with it the great responsibility to respond. Indifference will not do. We are either for or against God in how we respond to his word. God gives us his word that we may have life – abundant life – in him. He wills to work in and through each of us for his glory. God shares his word with us and he commissions us to speak it boldly and simply to others. Do you witness the truth and joy of the gospel by word and example to those around you?

### **Friday, July 12 ~ Fourteenth Week in the Season of Ordinary Time**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 10:16-23** Jesus said to his Apostles: “Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves. But 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. When they persecute you in one town, flee to another. Amen, I say to you, you will not finish the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”

**Meditation:** What does Jesus mean when he says his disciples must be sheep in the midst of wolves? The prophet Isaiah foretold a time when wolves and lambs will dwell in peace (Isaiah 11:6 and 65:25). This certainly refers to the second coming of Christ when all will be united under the Lordship of Jesus after he has put down his enemies and established the reign of God over the heavens and the earth. In the meantime, the disciples must expect opposition and persecution from those who oppose the gospel. 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?

**Prayer:** O God, who in the abasement of your Son have raised up a fallen world, fill your faithful with holy joy, for on those you have rescued from slavery to sin you bestow eternal gladness. 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 are a “can do” people and there are many times on many occasions where we respond to life’s challenges based simply on our past experiences. Sometimes this may be good and wise, other times we may be setting up ourselves for disappointment or worse. As life in this world becomes increasingly complex, and perhaps on occasions where you feel that you are being persecuted by others for doing the “right thing” according to the laws of God and the teachings of Christ and his Church., never feel alone because you are not – God is with you. And if you feel that you are ill-prepared to defend yourself or ill-equipped to speak as well as you desire, make the sign of the cross and say this brief prayer: “Holy Spirit, let Your words be mine.” Then pause for a moment, perhaps pray this brief prayer again, then conclude with an “Our Father” and a “Hail Mary.” When you pray “Holy Spirit, let Your words be mine” you are saying that you wish to let the Holy Spirit work in and through you, to let the words of the Holy Spirit be yours to say at the tight time and in the right sequence in order for the most positive outcome according to God’s will. When you pray this pray you are saying that I want the words of the Holy Spirit to be used, not mine, and that I want to become a conduit of the Holy Spirit to work in and through me: “For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” (Matthew 10:20).

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