

# Lectio Divina

## SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

*"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 August is dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary*

***"Love God and your brothers and sisters, and give yourselves to them generously. Be fervent in your celebration of the sacraments, in prayer, especially in adoration before the Eucharist, and in your ministry. Keep close to your flock, give freely of your time and energy to everyone, without reserve and without partiality, as the pierced side of the crucified Jesus and the example of the saints teach us to do. Remember that the Church, in the two thousand years of her history, has had – and today continues to have – wonderful examples of priestly holiness. From the earliest communities on, the Church has raised up priests who have been martyrs, tireless apostles, missionaries, and champions of charity. Cherish this treasure: learn their stories, study their lives and work, imitate their virtues, be inspired by their zeal, and invoke their intercession often and insistently! All too often, today's world offers models of success and prestige that are dubious and short-lived. Do not let yourselves be taken in by them! Look rather to the solid example and apostolic fruitfulness, frequently hidden and unassuming, of those who, with faith and dedication, have spent their lives in service of the Lord and their brothers and sisters. Keep their memory alive by your own example of fidelity."***

**+HOMILY EXCERPT, POPE LEO XIV, HOLY MASS AND PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS, JUNE 27, 2025**

### **Monday, August 4 ~ Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time**

#### **Memorial of Saint John Vianney, Patron Saint of Priests**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 14:13-21** When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves." He said to them, "There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves." But they said to him, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have here." Then he said, "Bring them here to me," and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over – twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

**Meditation:** We've all been there – we have plans for a relaxing day, then someone you know or love calls with an emergency and they need your help, and need it now. How do you react? How do you treat those who all of a sudden make unexpected demands on you? When Jesus and the disciples sought a secluded place to rest, they found instead a crowd of more than five thousand people waiting for them! Did they resent this intrusion on their hard-earned need for privacy and refreshment? Jesus certainly did not – in fact he welcomed them with open arms. Jesus put human need ahead of everything else. His compassion showed the depths of God's love and concern for all who are truly needy. Jesus gave the people the word of God and he healed them physically and spiritually. We can never intrude upon God nor exhaust his generosity and kindness. He is ever ready to give to those who earnestly seek him out.

**Prayer:** Almighty and merciful God, who made the Priest Saint John Vianney wonderful in his pastoral zeal, grant, we pray, that through his intercession and example we may in charity win brothers and sisters for Christ and attain with them eternal 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:** What is the significance of the miracle in today's Gospel? The miraculous feeding of such a great multitude pointed to God's provision of manna in the wilderness for the people of Israel under the leadership of Moses. This food foreshadowed the true heavenly bread which Jesus would offer his followers. Jesus makes a claim that only God can make – He is the true bread of heaven that can satisfy the deepest hunger we experience. 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 and do you share freely with others, especially those who are lacking basic food, clothing and shelter? What about those who simply need a ride to the grocery store, pharmacy, or doctor's office? Can you share your time and resources to help those in need? Exercise compassion and care for others, in witness to Christ.

**A Prayer for Priests:** We thank you, God our Father, for those who have responded to your call to priestly ministry. Accept this prayer we offer on their behalf: Fill your priests with the sure knowledge of your love. Open their hearts to the power and consolation of the Holy Spirit. Lead them to new depths of union with your Son. Increase in them profound faith in the Sacraments they celebrate as they nourish, strengthen, and heal us. Lord Jesus Christ, grant that these, your priests, may inspire us to strive for holiness by the power of their example, as men of prayer who ponder your word and follow your will. O Mary, Mother of Christ and our mother, guard with your maternal care these chosen ones, so dear to the Heart of your Son. Intercede for our priests that, offering the Sacrifice of your Son, they may be conformed more each day to the image of your Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Saint John Vianney, universal patron of priests, pray for us and for our priests. Amen.

**A Prayer for Vocations:** Heavenly Father, Your Divine Son taught us to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His vineyard. We earnestly beg You to bless our Diocese and our world with many priests who will love You fervently; and gladly and courageously spend their lives in service to Your Son's Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We pray that their lives may be always centered on our Eucharistic Lord; that they be always faithful to the Holy Father; and that they may be devoted sons of Mary, our Mother, in making You known and loved; and that all may attain Heaven. Bless our families and our children and choose from our home those whom You desire for this holy work. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **Tuesday, August 5 ~ Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time**

### **Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 11:27-28** As Jesus said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" But He said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

**Meditation:** When an admirer wished to compliment Jesus by praising his mother, Jesus did not deny the truth of the blessing she pronounced. Her "beatitude" (which means "blessedness" or "happiness") recalls Mary's canticle: All generations will call me blessed (Luke 1:48). Jesus adds to her words by pointing to the source of all true blessedness or happiness - union with God in heart, mind, and will. Mary humbly submitted herself to the miraculous plan of God for the incarnation of his only begotten Son - the Word of God made flesh in her womb, by declaring: I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word (Luke 1:38). Mary heard the word spoken to her by the angel and she believed it.

**Prayer:** Pardon the faults of your servants, we pray, O Lord, that we, who cannot please you by our own deeds, may be saved through the intercession of the Mother of your Son and our Lord. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Our ultimate goal in life, the very reason we were created in the first place, is not to attend a certain university, have a particular job, live at a certain address with a particular car parked in the driveway. No, our ultimate goal is to get to heaven where we may experience complete union with God. We were made for God and our hearts are restless until they rest in him. Saint Lucian of Antioch, an early Christian theologian and martyr, once said that "a Christian's only relatives are the saints." Those who follow Jesus Christ and who seek the will of God enter into a new family, a family of "saints" here on earth and in heaven. Jesus changes the order of relationships and shows that true kinship is not just a matter of flesh and blood. Our adoption as sons and daughters of God transforms all our relationships and requires a new order of loyalty to God and his kingdom. As in "those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke 11:28) and those who are "doers of the word, not hearers only" (James 1:22). Think about it!

**The Importance of Saint Mary Major:** We celebrate today the dedication of one of the four most illustrious churches of Rome. While each diocese and parish keeps its own dedication anniversary, the Church universal commemorates the consecration of the four great Roman basilicas, the mother churches, we may call them, of Christendom, viz., Saint John Lateran, Saint Peter Basilica, Saint Paul Outside the Walls, and Saint Mary Major. By means of these feasts the Church seeks to link all Christians with the Holy See. This feast commemorates the miracle of the snowfall that occurred during the night of August 4-5 in the year 358 on the site where the basilica now stands. According to tradition, the Virgin Mary appeared in a dream to two faithful Roman Christians, the patrician John and his wife, as well as to Pope Liberius (352-366), asking that a church be built in her honor on the site where snow would fall on the night of August 4-5. Pope Liberius traced the outlines of the church in the snow and the first basilica was built on that site. It was completed about a century later by Pope Sixtus III (432-440), after the Council of Ephesus in 431 during which Mary was declared to be the Mother of God.

### **Wednesday, August 6 ~ Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time Feast of the Transfiguration**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 9:2-10** Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them. As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.

**Meditation:** Saint Jerome's meditation on the Transfiguration of Jesus is worth reading as part of our meditation: "Do you wish to see the transfiguration of Jesus? Behold with me the Jesus of the Gospels. Let him be simply apprehended. There he is beheld both 'according to the flesh' and at the same time in his true divinity. He is beheld in the form of God according to our capacity for knowledge. This is how he was beheld by those who went up upon the lofty mountain to be apart with him. Meanwhile those who do not go up the mountain can still behold his works and hear his words, which are uplifting. It is before those who go up that Jesus is transfigured, and not to those below. When he is transfigured, his face shines as the sun, that he may be manifested to the children of light, who have put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light (Romans 13:12). They are no longer the children of darkness or night but have become the children of day. They walk honestly as in the day. Being manifested, he will shine to them not simply as the sun but as he is demonstrated to be, the sun of righteousness."

**Prayer:** O God, who in the glorious Transfiguration of your Only Begotten Son confirmed the mysteries of faith by the witness of the Fathers and wonderfully prefigured our full adoption to sonship, grant, we pray, to your servants, that, listening to the voice of your beloved Son, we may merit to become co-heirs with him. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** When God speaks to those present in today's Gospel and says "This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him..." God is also saying that to you, to me, and to every man, woman and child. And so we must ask ourselves: do I listen to Jesus, or do I turn a deaf ear to him? Do I pay attention to what Jesus teaches me, or do I think I know better – "Here's what I think" or "Here's what I feel." If your thoughts or feelings water down, detract or are contrary to what Jesus is revealing to us in sacred scripture, then you need to peel away the layers of the onion more and ask yourself whether or not you truly believe in Jesus? For if you truly believe in Jesus, and what he reveals to us and teaches us, then we ask for nothing more – not our own thoughts, opinions or feelings, which are of human origin – for we need nothing more than Jesus as he has the words of everlasting life.

### **Thursday, August 7 ~ Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time Saint Sixtus II, Pope and Martyr and Companions, Martyrs; Saint Cajetan, Priest**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 16:13-23** Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply,

"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you." He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

**Prayer ~ Saint Sixtus and Companions:** By the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray, almighty God, make us docile in believing the faith and courageous in confessing it, just as you granted Saint Sixtus and his companions that they might lay down their lives for the sake of your word and in witness to Jesus. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Prayer ~ Saint Cajetan:** O God, who endowed the Priest Saint Cajetan with the grace of imitating the apostolic way of life, grant us, through his example and intercession, to trust in you at all times and to seek unceasingly your Kingdom. 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 question that Jesus asks his disciples is one that Jesus also asks each one of us: Who do *YOU* say that I am? And so, who is Jesus for you? If you truly believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, sent by God to redeem us, sent by God to show us the way, the truth and the life that we are to follow, how do we respond by our individual and collective actions to Jesus' question "*Who do YOU say that I am?*" Actions speak louder than words; your response to this question is not only important, but can also be a life-changing moment for you. Think about your response; do something about it!

## **Friday, August 8 ~ Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time**

### **Memorial of Saint Dominic, Founder, Order of Preachers**

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 16:24-28** Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay each according to his conduct. Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom."

**Meditation:** What is the most important investment you can make with your life? Jesus poses some probing questions in today's Gospel to challenge our assumptions about what is most profitable and worthwhile. In every decision of life we are making ourselves a certain kind of person. The kind of person we are, our character, determines to a large extent the kind of future we will face and live. It is possible that some can gain all the things they set their heart on, only to wake up suddenly and discover that they missed the most important things of all. Of what value are material things if they don't help you gain what truly lasts in eternity. Neither money nor possessions can buy heaven, mend a broken heart, or cheer a lonely person. A true disciple gladly gives up all that he or she has in exchange for an unending life of joy and happiness with God. God gives without measure. The joy he offers no sadness or loss can diminish.

**Prayer:** May Saint Dominic come to the help of your Church by his merits and teaching, O Lord, and may he, who was an outstanding preacher of your truth, be a devoted intercessor on our behalf. 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:** There is a Prayer of Saint Dominic that comes to mind whenever I read today's Gospel: "May God the Father who made us bless us. May God the Son send his healing among us. May God the Holy Spirit move within us and give us eyes to see with, ears to hear with, and hands that your work might be done. May we walk and preach the word of God to all. May the angel of peace watch over us and lead us at last by God's grace to the Kingdom. Amen."

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 Catholic Culture.

frlumpe:2025