

# Lectio Divina

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

---

*"The first end I propose in our daily work is to do the will of God; secondly, to do it in the manner He wills it; and thirdly, to do it because it is His will."*

~SAINT ELIZABETH ANN SETON

**Monday, December 31 ~ Seventh Day in the Octave of Christmas  
Saint Sylvester I, Pope**

**Holy Gospel: John 1:1-18** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth. John testified to him and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'" From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only-begotten Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him.

**Meditation:** Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother. From the time of the Apostles the Christian faith has insisted on the incarnation of God's Son "who has come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2). 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.

**Prayer:** Come, O Lord, to the help of your people, sustained by the intercession of Pope Saint Sylvester, so that, running the course of this present life under your guidance we may happily attain life without end. 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.

**Contemplation:** Saint Gregory of Nyssa, one of the great early Church fathers (330-395 AD) wrote: "Sick, our nature demanded to be healed; fallen, to be raised up; dead, to rise again. We had lost the possession of the good; it was necessary for it to be given back to us. Closed in darkness, it was necessary to bring us the light; captives, we awaited a Savior; prisoners, help; slaves, a liberator. Are these things minor or insignificant? Did they not move God to descend to human nature and visit it, since humanity was in so miserable and unhappy a state?" If we are going to behold the glory of God, we will do so through Jesus Christ. Let each of us give thanks from the heart to God the Father for sending his only begotten Son to redeem us, and to show us the one path that leads to eternal life.

**Tuesday, January 1 ~ Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God  
~ A Holy Day of Obligation ~**

**Holy Gospel: Luke 2:16-21** The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and

praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

**Meditation:** What's the significance of a name? For the Jewish people the giving of a name had great importance. When a name was given it represented what that person should be in the future. An unknown name meant that someone could not be completely known. To not acknowledge someone's name meant both denial of the person, destruction of their personality, and change in their destiny. A person's name expressed the reality of his or her being at its deepest level. A Jewish child was named at the time of circumcision, eight days after birth. This rite was instituted by God as an outward sign to single out those who belonged to the chosen people. It was a sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham and his posterity.

**Prayer:** O God, who through the fruitful virginity of Blessed Mary bestowed on the human race the grace of eternal salvation, grant, we pray, that we may experience the intercession of her, through whom we were found worthy to receive the author of life, 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:** In fulfillment of this precept, Mary's newborn child is given the name Jesus on the eighth day according to the Jewish custom. Joseph and Mary gave the name Jesus because that is the name given by God's messenger before Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb. This name signifies Jesus' identity and his mission. The literal Hebrew means the Lord saves. Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in Jesus his eternal Son made man will save his people from their sins (ref. Matthew 1:21). In the birth and naming of this child we see the wondrous design and plan of God in giving us a Savior who would bring us grace, mercy, and freedom from the power of sin and the fear of death. The name "Jesus" signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of his Son who became man for our salvation. Peter the Apostle exclaimed that there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved (ref. Acts 2:12). In the name of Jesus demons flee, cripples walk, the blind see, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised. His name is exalted far above every other name (ref. Philippians 2:9-11). The name Jesus is at the heart of all Christian prayer. It is through and in Jesus that we pray to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. Many Christians have died with one word on the lips, the name of Jesus. Do you exalt the name of Jesus and pray with confidence in his name?

**About this Solemnity:** "Mary, the all-holy ever-virgin Mother of God, is the masterwork of the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the fullness of time. For the first time in the plan of salvation and because his Spirit had prepared her, the Father found the dwelling place where his Son and his Spirit could dwell among men. In this sense the Church's Tradition has often read the most beautiful texts on wisdom in relation to Mary. Mary is acclaimed and represented in the liturgy as the 'Seat of Wisdom.'" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 721)

## **Wednesday, January 2 ~ Ninth Day in the Christmas Season Saints Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen**

**Holy Gospel: John 1:19-28** This is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said: "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said." Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

**Meditation:** John was the greatest of the prophets, yet he lived as a humble and faithful servant of God. He pointed others to Jesus, Messiah and Savior of the world. The Christian church from the earliest of times has given John many titles which signify his mission: *Witness of the Lord, Trumpet of Heaven, Herald of Christ, Voice of the Word, Precursor of Truth, Friend of the Bridegroom, Crown of the Prophets, Forerunner of the Redeemer, Preparer of Salvation, Light of the Martyrs, and Servant of the Word.* Which begs the question: Do you point others to Christ by the life you lead, by the lifestyle you embrace, by what you choose to do and not do, by your witness and example?

**Prayer:** O God, who were pleased to give light to your Church by the example and teaching of the Bishops Saints Basil and Gregory, grant, we pray, that in humility we may learn your truth and practice it faithfully in charity. 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:** John the Baptist did such a great job of stirring the peoples' expectation of the Messiah's arrival, that many thought he might be the Messiah himself, or at least the great prophet Elijah who was expected to reappear at the Messiah's coming (ref. Malachi 4:5, Deuteronomy 18:15). John had no mistaken identity. In all humility and sincerity he said he was only a voice bidding people to prepare the way for the coming of the King. John the Baptist bridges the Old and New Testaments. He is the last of the Old Testament Prophets who points the way to the Messiah. He is the first of the New Testament witnesses and martyrs. He is the herald who prepares the way for Jesus and who announces his mission to the people: Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! Do you recognize your identity as a child of God and a citizen of heaven? If not, it's never too late to change!

### **Thursday, January 3 ~ Tenth Day in the Christmas Season The Most Holy Name of Jesus**

**Holy Gospel: John 1:29-34** John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."

**Meditation:** John calls Jesus the Lamb of God and thus signifies Jesus' mission as the One who redeems us from our sins. The blood of the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12) delivered the Israelites in Egypt from death. The blood of Jesus, the true Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), delivers us from everlasting death and destruction. It is significant that John was the son of a priest, Zachariah, who participated in the daily sacrifice of a lamb in the temple for the sins of the people (Exodus 29). In Jesus he saw the true and only sacrifice which can deliver us from sin. When John says he did not know Jesus he was referring to the hidden reality of Jesus divinity. But the Holy Spirit in that hour revealed to John Jesus' true nature, such that John bore witness that this is the Son of God. We can only know who Jesus truly is through the Holy Spirit who reveals him to us. Do you seek to grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ?

**Prayer:** O God, who founded the salvation of the human race on the Incarnation of your Word, give your peoples the mercy they implore, so that all may know there is no other name to be invoked but the Name of your Only Begotten Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** From apostolic times, the Church has professed that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10-11). Through the particular efforts of St. Bernardine of Siena, devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus was promoted through the inscription of the monogram of the Holy Name (IHS) and the addition of the name of Jesus to the Hail Mary. Pope Sixtus V first granted an indulgence for the uttering of the phrase used so often by Pope John Paul II and included among the pious invocations of the current *Enchiridion Indulgentiarum*: "Praised be Jesus Christ!"

**About the Holy Name of Jesus:** This feast marks no progress in the development of the Church year. It merely embellishes the occasion just observed when the Child received the Name Jesus as had been foretold by the angel. The feast is meant to impress on us Christians the dignity of the Holy Name. It is a relatively new feast, stemming out of devotional piety. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to find in it some liturgical or ancient Christian dogma. What did a name signify originally? The name should express the nature of a thing. Thus Adam in paradise gave the animals names in accordance with their being. Among the Jews God's name expressed His essence, Yahweh, i.e., I (alone) am who am (and cause all else to be). The Jews had the highest respect for the name of God, a reverence that finds continuation in the Our Father: "Hallowed be Thy Name." Persons who played prominent roles in the history of salvation often received their names from God Himself. Adam — man of the earth; Eve — mother of all the living; Abraham — father of many nations; Peter — the rock. The Savior's precursor was given the name God assigned him. According to divine precedent, then, the name of the Redeemer should not be accidental, of human choosing, but given by God Himself; His name should express His mission. We read in Sacred

Scripture how the angel Gabriel revealed that name to Mary: "You shall call His name Jesus." And to St. Joseph the angel not merely revealed the name but explained its meaning: "You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." The Messiah should not only be the savior, but should be called Savior. With Jesus, therefore, the name actually tells the purpose of His existence. This is why we must esteem His name as sacred. Whenever we pronounce it, we ought to bow our heads; for the very name reminds us of the greatest favor we have ever received, salvation.

## **Friday, January 4 ~ Eleventh Day in the Christmas Season Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious**

**Holy Gospel: John 1:35-42** John was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah," which is translated Christ. Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas," which is translated Peter.

**Meditation:** John calls Jesus the Lamb of God and thus signifies Jesus' mission as the One who redeems us from our sins. The blood of the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12) delivered the Israelites in Egypt from death. The blood of Jesus, the true Passover Lamb who offered his life up for us on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 Cor. 5:7), delivers us from everlasting death and destruction. It is significant that John was the son of a priest, Zachariah, who participated in the daily sacrifice of a lamb in the temple for the sins of the people (Exodus 29). In Jesus he saw the true and only sacrifice which can deliver us from sin. How did John know the true identity of Jesus, as the Messiah? The Holy Spirit revealed to John Jesus' true nature, such that John bore witness that this is the Son of God. How can we be certain that Jesus is truly the Christ, the Son of the God? The Holy Spirit makes Christ known to us through the gift of faith. God gives us freely of his Spirit that we may comprehend the great mystery and plan of God to unite all things in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:10).

**Prayer:** O God, who crowned with the gift of true faith Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton's burning zeal to find you, grant by her intercession and example that we may always seek you with diligent love and find you in daily service with sincere faith. 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.

**Contemplation:** Jesus invites each of us to "come and see" for ourselves that his word is true and everlasting. "Come and see" is God's invitation for fellowship and communion with the One who made us in love for love. Saint Augustine tells us something very important about God and how he relates to us: "If you hadn't been called by God, what could you have done to turn back? Didn't the very One who called you when you were opposed to Him make it possible for you to turn back?" It is God who initiates and who draws us to himself. Without his grace, mercy, and help we could not find him. Through Abraham God established a nation for himself. Through faith Peter grasped who Jesus truly was – the Anointed One (Messiah and Christ) and the only begotten Son of God. The New Testament describes the church as a spiritual house or temple with each member joined together as living stones (see 1 Peter 2:5). Faith in Jesus Christ makes us into rocks or spiritual stones. The Holy Spirit gives us the gift of faith to know Jesus personally, power to live the gospel faithfully, and courage to witness to others the joy and truth of the gospel. The Lord Jesus is ever ready to draw us near to himself.

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 the Catholic Culture web site.

frlumpe:2018

