

Lectio
divina



*In the life of prayer
let us give back everything to God
to be constantly transformed into new creatures*

Congregation
Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart

Liturgical Year 2012-13

Lectio Divina

Year of Faith

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Main sources of reference

Bible

Chapter Document

Apostolic letter 'Porta Fidei'

The New Evangelization for the transmission of the Christian Faith

Instrumentum Laboris for the XIII Synod of Bishops

Franciscan and Congregational Sources

Faith is choosing to stand with the Lord
so as to live with him.
(*Porta Fidei* 10)

Dearest sisters,

the ecclesial events we are witnessing in this time: the XIII Synod of the bishops on the Evangelization and the Year of Faith, infuse in us new hope and strengthen the conviction that the Lord, through these events, makes Himself present, giving to all His providential care. Moreover He challenges us to continue the journey of growth in faithfulness, holiness and witnessing.

The time of grace given to us intends – as our Pope Benedict is telling – to help us “to rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith” (*Porta Fidei* 7).

This year the gift of the **Lectio Divina** is inserted in this ecclesial journey following the itinerary of the General Chapter document: *in the life of prayer let us give back everything to God to be constantly transformed into new creatures.*

The sources of reference that will guide us this year are:

- the Word of God, and precisely the Gospels;
- the ecclesial documents “*Porta Fidei*” and the “*Instrumentum Laboris*” of the Synod of the Bishops on ‘*the New Evangelization for the transmission of the Christian Faith*’ that offer us some passages to introduce the themes of the Lectio.

Moreover our reflection and meditation will be guided by our Founders and our Holy Protectors. The passages taken from their writings and their life intend to help us to deepen our faith, to treasure it and to make it a “light” for our personal and communal journey and for many brothers and sisters who desire to see in us an authentic witnessing of Faith and of God’s love, our only richness.

“*Lectio divina (personal and communal) – as we can read in the Instrumentum Laboris of the Synod (n.97) – is prayer that provides ample opportunity to listen to the Word of God, thereby bringing the life of faith and prayer to its inexhaustible source. God speaks, calls, questions, guides, enlightens and judges.*”

With these words of our Bishops I wish you a holy journey, entrusting all of you to Mary, the listening Virgin who “*by faith, accepted the Angel’s word and believed*” (*Porta Fidei* 13).

From her we learn to be docile to the Word, so that this time of grace may help us to rediscover the beauty of our Faith and to live with renewed enthusiasm the encounter with Jesus in the simplicity of our daily life, to be authentic witnesses of the Father, of His tenderness and of His Mercy.

With affection

Sr. Paola Dotto
General superior

Year of Faith
Rome October 11, 2012



1.

The gift of BAPTISM: the door of Faith

The “door of faith” is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church... To enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime. It begins with baptism, through which we can address God as Father, and it ends with the passage through death to eternal life, fruit of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. (Porta Fidei 1)

From the Gospel according to St. Matthew Mt. 3: 1-6; 11-17

It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: “A voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’”

John wore clothing made of camel’s hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins ... He said ... “I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?”

Jesus said to him in reply, “Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.” Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened (for him), and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove (and) coming upon him.

And a voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Let us meditate with St. Anthony of Padua

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. You too will be my beloved in whom I am well pleased, my son adopted by grace, if only you will be humbled by the example of my co-equal Son, whom I will show you in such a way that from the shape of his life you may shape the conduct of your own life. So shaped, you will receive life and be enabled to hear the words, “Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.” Your faith has enlightened you. (Sermons)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. **Do I feel really that I am the beloved daughter of God the Father?**

2. **How am I expressing the faith, given to me with the Baptism, in my daily life?**

Note:

For the concluding prayer of this Lectio it is suggested to make the common renewal of the Baptismal promises. See on pag. 36





2

The life of Faith is to give the primacy to God

Through faith, this new life shapes the whole of human existence according to the radical new reality of the resurrection. To the extent that he freely cooperates, man's thoughts and affections, mentality and conduct are slowly purified and transformed, on a journey that is never completely finished in this life.

(Porta Fidei 6)

From the Gospel according to St. Mark

Mk. 12: 28-34

One of the scribes, when he came forward and heard them disputing and saw how well he had answered them, asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?"

Jesus replied, "The first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone!'

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, 'He is One and there is no other than he.'

And 'to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself' is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

And when Jesus saw that (he) answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Let us meditate with St. Louis IX

My dearest son, my first instruction is that you should love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your strength. Without this there is no salvation. Keep yourself, my son, from everything that you know displeases God...

If the Lord has permitted you to have some trial, bear it willingly and with gratitude, considering that it has happened for your good ... pray to the Lord devoutly, either aloud or with the interior prayer of the heart.

Be kind-hearted to the poor, the unfortunate and the afflicted. Give them as much help and consolation as you can. Thank God for all the benefits he has bestowed upon you. ... (from the Testament to his son)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. Which place do I reserve to God in my thoughts, in my affection, in my actions? Do I give to Him the first place?

2. What is my commitment in the journey of purification so that love may guide all my relations?





FAITH in GOD-COMMUNION: Father, Son and Holy Spirit

To profess faith in the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is to believe in one God who is Love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8): the Father, who in the fullness of time sent his Son for our salvation; Jesus Christ, who in the mystery of his death and resurrection redeemed the world; the Holy Spirit, who leads the Church across the centuries as we await the Lord's glorious return. (Porta Fidei 1)

From the Gospel according to St. John Jn. 14: 6-12, 15-17, 23

Jesus said to him, "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...

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you...

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.

Let us meditate with St. Clare

See, it is already clear that the soul of a faithful person, the most worthy of God's creations through the grace of God, is greater than heaven, since the heavens and the rest of creation together cannot contain their Creator and only the soul of a faithful person is his dwelling place and throne and this is possible only through the charity that the wicked lack. For the Truth says: The one who loves me, will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and we shall come to him and make our dwelling place with him. (Third letter 21-23)

The Word of God challenges us.

- 1. With our Baptism we have become the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity; what is stirring you in the Gospel passage or in the words of Saint Clare?**
- 2. Who is Jesus for me? Can I recognize Him as the "Way", the "Truth", the "Life"?**





4

With FAITH we learn to pray from JESUS

The kingdom will grow in the manner in which each person learns to turn, in the intimacy of prayer, to God as Father and, following the example of Jesus Christ, to recognize, in a totally free manner, that the goal of life is fulfilling God's will.
(The New evangelization... Instr. Laboris n 24)

From the Gospel according to St. Matthew

Mt. 6: 9-21

“This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one.

If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

“When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

Let us meditate with St Anthony of Padua

Prayer is an outpouring of affection towards God, a devoted and familiar dialog with Him, a rest of the mind enlighten from above that search to enjoy the presence of God as much as possible. Prayer is also to ask for temporal goods needed for the present life, but those who are asking for them to the Lord, with true Christian spirit, subordinate always their will to God's will, even if only one thing is moving them to pray: the heavenly Father knows what is really necessary to us. At last prayer is thanksgiving, that is to recognize the goodness received and to offer in exchange to God all our works, so that our prayer is continuous. (from the Sermons)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. Which “word” of the Lord in this Gospel passage can help you in your prayer life?

2. How much the prayer of the “Our Father” that is on our lips every day, can transform our life?





5

JOSEPH: the just man, guided by FAITH

Knowing the content to be believed is not sufficient unless the heart, the authentic sacred space within the person, is opened by grace that allows the eyes to see below the surface and to understand that what has been proclaimed is the word of God.
(Porta Fidei 10)

From the Gospel according to St. Matthew

Mt. 1:18-25

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit.

Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly.

Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.

She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet:

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us."

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

Let us meditate with St. Anthony of Padua

Faith is the main virtue and those who do not believe are like the Hebrews who rebelled against Moses in the desert. Without faith we cannot enter the kingdom of God; it is the life of the soul. The Christian understands the mysteries of God with the eyes of his heart enlightened by faith and he professes them in his life.

The true faith is accompanied by charity. Believing in God, for the Christian, means not only to believe that God exists, that He is true but to believe on loving, surrendering oneself to God, being united to Him and conforming one's life to His.
(from the Sermons)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. Which example of life can we take from St. Joseph in order to grow in faith?

2. Is the "eye" of my heart enlightened by faith, helping me to surrender myself to God? Which are my resistances?





6

With MARY we glorify the LORD in FAITH

By faith, Mary accepted the Angel's word and believed the message that she was to become the Mother of God in the obedience of her devotion. Visiting Elizabeth, she raised her hymn of praise to the Most High for the marvels he worked in those who trust him
(Porta Fidei 13)

From the Gospel according to St. Luke

Lk. 1: 40-56

Mary entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.

The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Let us meditate with St. Clare

Among the other gifts that we have received and do daily receive from our benefactor, the Father of mercies, and for which we must express the deepest thanks to the glorious Father of Christ, there is our vocation, for which, all the more by way of its being more perfect and greater, do we owe the greatest thanks to Him. ... The Son of God has been made for us the Way which our blessed Father Francis, His true lover and imitator, has shown and taught us by word and example.

Therefore, beloved sisters, we must consider the immense gifts that God has bestowed.
(Testament 2-3; FF 2823)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. *What is the Spirit suggesting to us in the readings?*

2. *Following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, how can I make my life a song of praise?*

Note:

To conclude this lectio the prayer on pag. 44 can be used.





FAITH supports our PRAYER and transforms it into LIFE

This encounter with Jesus, through his Spirit, is the Father's great gift to humanity. We are prepared for this encounter through the action of grace in us... After this encounter, everything is different as a result of metanoia, that is, the state of conversion strongly urged by Jesus himself.

(The New Evangelization ... Instr. Laboris n 19)

From the Gospel according to St. Luke

Lk. 18: 1-14

Then he told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, "There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, 'Render a just decision for me against my adversary.' For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, 'While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.'" The Lord said, "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

He then addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. "Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity - greedy, dishonest, adulterous - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.' But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.'

I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Let us meditate with St. Francis

Hear my sons and my brothers, and with your ears receive my words. Incline the ear of your heart and obey the voice of the Son of God. Keep His commandments with all your heart and fulfil His counsels with a perfect mind. Praise Him for He is good and extol Him in your works, for therefore He has sent you through all the world that by word and deed you may bear witness to His voice, and you may make known to all that there is no other Almighty besides Him. Persevere under discipline and obedience and with a good and firm purpose fulfil what you have promised Him.

(Letter to all friars, 5- 9)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. *What is my attitude in prayer, in my personal and intimate relationship with God?*
2. *Jesus said: "when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" Can He find faith in my heart, in my behaviour?*





THE EUCHARIST: The PRESENCE of JESUS, received in FAITH

In a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, faith takes the form of a relationship with him and in remembrance of him, especially in the Eucharist and the Word of God, and creates in us the mind of Christ, through the Spirit, a mentality which makes us recognize our brothers and sisters, gathered by the Spirit in his Church, and, in turn, see ourselves as witnesses and heralds of this Gospel.

(The New Evangelization ... Instr. Laboris n 19)

From the Gospel according to St. John Jn. 6: 47-60, 66-69

Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The Jews quarrelled 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. Then many of his disciples who were listening said, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" ...

As a result of this, many (of) his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"

Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

Let us meditate with St. Francis

Behold daily He humbles Himself as when from His "royal throne" He came into the womb of the Virgin; daily He Himself comes to us with like humility; daily He descends from the bosom of His Father upon the altar in the hands of the priest. And as He appeared in true flesh to the Holy Apostles, so now He shows Himself to us in the sacred Bread; and as they by means of their fleshly eyes saw only His flesh, yet contemplating Him with their spiritual eyes, believed Him to be God, so we, seeing bread and wine with bodily eyes, see and firmly believe it to be His most holy Body and true and living Blood.

(Admonitions I, 16-21; FF 144)

The Word of God challenges us.

- 1. Do I consider fundamental for my consecrated life the "Eucharistic Mystery" that is prayed, celebrated, lived and adored?***
- 2. How am I receiving the Eucharistic Jesus in my life?***





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In the PRAYER. ..the STRENGTH of FAITH

To keep our gaze fixed upon Jesus Christ, the “pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2): in him, all the anguish and all the longing of the human heart finds fulfilment. The joy of love, the answer to the drama of suffering and pain, the power of forgiveness ... all this finds fulfilment in the mystery of his Incarnation, in his becoming man, in his sharing our human weakness so as to transform it by the power of his resurrection. .

(Porta Fidei 13)

From the Gospel according to St. Matthew

Mt. 26: 36-44

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”

He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. Then he said to them, “My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me.”

He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will.”

When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “So you could not keep watch with me for one hour?”

Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Withdrawing a second time, he prayed again, “My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!”

Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open. He left them and withdrew again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing again.

Let us meditate with our Foundress Laura Leroux

Let us console each other with a generous Fiat that is not only expressed with the lips but also wholeheartedly, with all that internal energy with which we are always to unite ourselves to the Divine Will be it in crosses, or be it in consolations. Oh, dearest daughters, let us not waste time allowing ourselves to be depressed by certain displeasures that are portrayed by our imagination as insupportable when a small act of love of God would be enough to destroy them!

(F2, p. 8)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. *Which are the words of God that touch you deeply?*

2. *“Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test”: how am I accepting and living this invitation of Jesus in the trials of life?*





10

TO BELIEVE is to trust in divine Providence

Only through believing, then, does faith grow and become stronger; there is no other possibility for possessing certitude with regard to one's life apart from self-abandonment, in a continuous crescendo, into the hands of a love that seems to grow constantly because it has its origin in God. (Porta Fidei 7)

From the Gospel according to St. Matthew

Mt. 6: 25-34

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat (or drink), or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they?

Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span?

Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was clothed like one of them.

If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? So do not worry and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ or ‘What are we to drink?’ or ‘What are we to wear?’

All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

But seek first the kingdom (of God) and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.

Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Let us meditate with our Founder Fr. Gregory

God knows better than us how things have to proceed... Let us allow Him to do...

We need to pray more and then to say our Fiat with the full submission to Him who prepares everything best... (Letters of Fr. Gregory)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. What am I thinking most or worry about during the day?

2. How am I looking at the future?





11

The mysteries of FAITH, revealed to the humble of heart

“Man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved”. The heart indicates that the first act by which one comes to faith is God’s gift and the action of grace which acts and transforms the person deep within.

(Porta Fidei 10)

From the Gospel according to St. Matthew

Mt.11: 25-30

At that time Jesus said in reply, “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike.

Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

Let us meditate with our Fonder Fr. Gregory

In each part of His life, Jesus reveals His amiability and sweetness. His spirit is a spirit of peace, of simplicity, of meekness, of humility ecc. Even in this life just a sight of Him attracted the heart of all. A peaceful and calm expression, one that was affable, sweet, amiable...

The meekness of His Heart is always the same even today for those who love Him. (F2 p.106)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. Following the example of Jesus, meek and humble of heart, how do I consider and live the virtue of humility?

2. The Spirit is revealed to the little ones: how am I receiving the inspirations of the Lord that are coming to me even from those who are considered “little” to the human eyes?





12

TO PRAY with FAITH in SPIRIT and TRUTH

The people of today can still experience the need to go to the well, like the Samaritan woman, in order to hear Jesus, who invites us to believe in him and to draw upon the source of living water welling up within him. (Porta Fidei 3)

From the Gospel according to St. John Jn. 4: 7- 15, 19-24

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water ... Sir, I can see that you are a prophet.

Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is

now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth."

Let us meditate with St. Francis

Let us love God, therefore, and adore Him with a pure heart and a pure mind, because He Who seeks this above all things has said: True adorers adore the Father in Spirit and Truth.

For all who adore Him must adore Him in the Spirit of truth.

(Letter to all faithful 19-20; F 187)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. *How am I nourishing the spirit of prayer?*

2. *In what do I need to grow according to this Gospel passage?*





13

The FRUITFULNESS of a LIFE of FAITH

Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy. It makes us fruitful, because it expands our hearts in hope and enables us to bear life-giving witness.

(Porta Fidei, 7)

From the Gospel according to St. John

Jn. 15: 9-16

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 may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.

Let us meditate with saint Elisabeth of Hungary

In Elisabeth's case, her passion for Christ led her to assume the Gospel as her form of life and to live it in the most genuine style of Francis: simply, without glossa, in all its spiritual and material aspects. This was a proposal which was manifested in her deepest existential attitudes, such as: the recognition of the absolute lordship of God; the need to free herself from everything and to become small like a child in order to enter the Kingdom of the Father; the fulfilment, up to the ultimate consequences, of the new commandment of love. Sanctity consists of loving as Jesus loved. To love God and to love one's neighbour are two commands which cannot be separated. Passion for Christ, passion for the poor, are two passions which necessarily go together always ... Elisabeth ... in her life there shone, with singular splendour, the supremacy of charity. Her person was a song to love, shaped in service and abnegation, emptied out in order to sow good, [...]... "we have to make men happy", as she used to say to her servants-sisters, Elisabeth gladdened the heart of whoever came close to her. The depths of her soul were inhabited by the kingdom of peace.

(Letter of the Min Gen José Rodríguez Carballo for the centenary of Saint Elisabeth)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. *What is the source and the reason of my joy?*
2. *How am I living my consecration and mission: am I a witness of faith and of love?*





14

PRAYER: a guide to DISCERNMENT

Jesus knew how to plumb the depths of a person and elicit faith in the God who first loved us.

(The New Evangelization ... Instr. Laboris n 23)

From the Gospel according to St. Luke

Lk. 6: 12-19

In those days he departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God.

When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called a Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

And he came down with them and stood on a stretch of level ground. A great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and even those who were tormented by unclean spirits were cured.

Everyone in the crowd sought to touch him because power came forth from him and healed them all.

Let us meditate with our history

... after having asked the prayers to be said for the good choice of the sisters to be sent to Scutari, and, in the meantime, while we were waiting until we would receive the order that they leave, we were discussing on the qualities and gifts of several sisters.

But evidently God disposes differently. In fact the order to leave never arrived... Instead God disposed that our sisters would be called to the Missions in the United States of America... (Historical memoirs F1 p. 162)

... and with St. Francis

And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel. (Testament, 14; FF 116)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. *Who and what are guiding my choices?*
2. *To have time and places for prayer was very important for Jesus: and for me?*





15

The confident and continuous PRAYER

Jesus' miracles of healing are also a sign of the salvation of the spirit, namely liberation from sin. In performing acts of healing, he invites people to faith, conversion and a desire for forgiveness. Received in faith, healing leads to salvation.

(The New Evangelization ... Instr. Laboris n 29)

From the Gospel according to St. Luke

Lk. 7: 2-10

A centurion there had a slave who was ill and about to die, and he was valuable to him. When he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and save the life of his slave.

They approached Jesus and strongly urged him to come, saying, "He deserves to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation and he built the synagogue for us."

And Jesus went with them, but when he was only a short distance from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof. Therefore, I did not consider myself worthy to come to you; but say the word and let my servant be healed.

For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it."

When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him and, turning, said to the crowd following him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."

When the messengers returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Let us meditate with our Foundress Laura Leroux

Oh dear sisters! Why in your afflictions, in your trials, in your needs, don't you turn with greater faith to this Divine friend whose love for your soul never diminishes?... He has a voice that can persuade and comfort better than anyone can imagine; but in order to hear Him you must knock, and knock with faith, with hope, with love, with simplicity.

(F2 p.17)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. Which words of the Gospel are provoking me?

2. To whom am I going in my difficulties... ?





16

CHARITY: the fruit of a LIFE of FAITH

It is faith that enables us to recognize Christ and it is his love that impels us to assist him whenever he becomes our neighbour along the journey of life.

(Porta Fidei 14)

From the Gospel according to St. Luke

Lk. 10: 25-37

There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” He said in reply, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.”

He replied to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

Jesus replied, “A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead.

A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveller who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight.

He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’

Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbour to the robbers’ victim?”

He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Let us mediate with St. Anthony

The sun is the source of heat and light. In the same way the witnesses of Christ must be the source of life and doctrine to benefit others. May your life be ardent of charity and bright your doctrine.

A crystal, struck by the rays of the sun, reflects them. In the same way a believer, enlightened by Christ’s light, must send forth spark of words and example to be able to enkindle the neighbour...

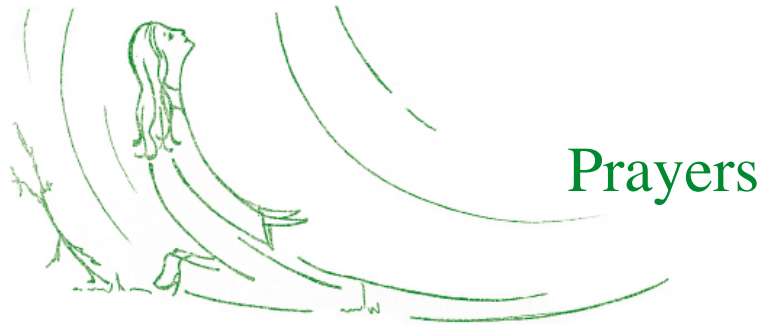
May our soul shine brightly like the sun, so that what we can see in faith may be seen in the actions, the good we have within become a witness of external actions... and what we have tested in contemplation may become warm love for our neighbour...

(from the Sermons)

The Word of God challenges us.

1. *What reflection does arise in me from this Gospel passage?*
2. *How can I make my life more ardent of charity and my faith in Jesus more shining?*





Renewal of Baptismal Promises

Guide: Let us open our spirit to His voice and, remembering our Baptism, let us express in prayer our gratitude to the Lord for the gift of Faith.

All: Thanks be to God, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Guide: Dear sisters, through the paschal mystery we have been buried with Christ in baptism, so that we may walk with him in newness of life. And so, now let us renew the promises of Holy Baptism, committing ourselves to listen to Jesus' voice, who is calling us by name inviting to follow Him.

Guide: Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

All: I do.

Guide: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered death and was buried, rose again from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father?

All: I do.

Guide: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

All: I do.

Guide: And may almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has given us new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and bestowed on us forgiveness of our sins, keep us by his grace, in Christ Jesus our Lord, for eternal life.

All. Amen.

Invocation prayers before the Lectio Divina

1. *Prayer before the Crucifix*

Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me true faith, certain hope, perfect charity and deep humility, understanding and knowledge, Lord, that I may carry out Your holy and true command. Amen.

2. *Holy Father,* through Jesus your Son, the Word made flesh for us, send me your Holy Spirit, that my ears may be opened to hear the "letter of love" that you have written to me and enlighten my mind that I may understand it in depth. Make my heart docile that it may receive your will with joy and help me to give witness to it. Amen.

3. *O Lord,* you know us and you search us, you know our incapacity to understand your mystery and ours. You know that we are not able to speak of these things in truth.

In the name of Jesus we ask you, o Father: send to us your Spirit that may search into the depth of our heart and make us able to know ourselves in the way you know us with love and mercy.

Grant us the grace to recognize what is an hindrance to your spirit in us. Make us able to see the evil and to look at it with the light of your mercy, coming from the death and the resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reign with you forever and ever. Amen.

(Cardinal C. M. Martini)

4. *Lord Jesus Christ,* today your light shines on us as a source of life and of joy! Give us your Spirit of love and truth so that we can discover and interpret, in the light of your Word, the signs of your divine Presence in the world and receive them in faith to live always in the joy of your loving presence with us. Amen



5. **O Father**, Christ your Son is already pleading for us, but through your Word, which is life, you also grant us the grace of opening our hearts to you in deep, intense, true and enlightened prayer. Send us the Consoler, the Spirit of truth, that he may always dwell within our hearts. He is the fire of love that unites you with Jesus. Grant that, through your Word, we too may enter into this love and live by it. Touch our spirit, our mind and all our being that we may welcome the commandments, hidden in these few Gospel verses; that we may keep them, live them out fully. Amen

6. **Come, Holy Spirit**, fill our minds with your light so that we can understand the true sense of your Word.
Come, Holy Spirit, enkindle in our hearts the fire of your love to inflame our faith.
Come, Holy Spirit, fill our being with your power to strengthen what is weak in us, in our service to God. Amen

7. **Spirit of truth**, sent by Jesus to guide us to the whole truth, enlighten our minds so that we may understand the Scriptures. You who overshadowed Mary and made her fruitful ground where the Word of God could germinate, purify our hearts from all obstacles to the Word. Help us to learn like her to listen with good and pure hearts to the Word that God speaks to us in life and in Scripture, so that we may observe the Word and produce good fruit through our perseverance. Amen.

8. **Come, Holy Spirit**. You are the Life giver, the comforter, the fire of soul, the interior living source.
You are love, in the divine meaning of this word.
We need you absolutely because You are the Life of our life.
You are the Sanctifier that we have received many times in the sacraments.
You are the touch of God that has imprinted the Christian character in our souls.
You are the sweetness and the strength of a true Christian life.
You are guest of our soul.
You are our friend to whom we want to show interior attention, reverent silence, docile listening, loving devotion and strong love.
Come Holy Spirit to renew the face of the earth.

(Pope Paul VI)

9. **Holy Spirit, Spirit of Wisdom**, of Science, of Intelligence, of Counsel, fill us with the knowledge of the Word of God, fill us with every kind of spiritual wisdom and intelligence, so as to be able to understand it.
Under your guidance may we be able to understand the Gospel of this Lectio divina. Holy Spirit, we need you, the only one who continually moulds in us the figure and the form of Jesus.
And we turn to you, Mary, Mother of Jesus and of the Church, you who have lived the inebriating and totalizing Presence of the Holy Spirit, you who have experienced the power of his force in you, who has seen it operating in your Son Jesus from the time when he was in your maternal womb, open our heart and our mind, so that we may be docile to listen to the Word of God.



Prayers to end the Lectio Divina

1. **Act of Faith**

O my God, I firmly believe
that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins and that he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches because you have revealed them who are eternal truth and wisdom, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. In this faith I intend to live and die. Amen.

2. **Lord Jesus**, You are the stable rock in which our faith is rooted; you are our love no one can keep us apart: dispel our fears and give us the total trust in your grace, so that every moment of our life may be a clear witness and we can do everything with your strength. You who are God and live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

3. O Lord, I believe: I want to believe in You.

O Lord, make full my faith, without measure, that can seep into my way of thinking, of judging the human and divine things.

O Lord, make free my faith that I may give my assent, accept the sacrifices and the responsibilities it requires and that I may proclaim in my life:

I believe in you, o Lord...

O Lord, make strong my faith; that it can face the oppositions, the problems... and the adversities of those who debate, refuse and deny it; may it become strong in the trials of your Truth and capable to withstand the criticism.

O Lord, make joyful my faith, that it may give peace and joy to my spirit guiding it to pray with God and to serve my brethren, and so irradiate the inner beatitude...

O Lord, make active my faith... that it may create a true friendship with you and a constant witness of hope in my actions and sufferings..

O Lord, make humble my faith that it never presumes to have foundation in the experiences of my thought and sentiment, but it may surrender to the Holy Spirit. Guide it to find security on being docile to the Tradition and the authority of the Church teachings. Amen.

(Pope Paul VI)

4. Lord, we are weak in faith: I pray, come to our help!

Teach us to see beyond things, events and people. You told that if we have faith as a seed small as a mustard seed, we can move mountains, give us at least a grain of faith, what is needed to do your Will with courage, constancy and trust.

Help us to understand that nothing is by chance, that we live out of love, that others too live out of love and they are journeying with us as we are journeying with them so that we can praise God together.

Grant the grace that our little faith be transformed in works, so that we may be a living witness of your love.

May our faith help us to overcome temptations, sufferings and all kinds of difficulties. Keep our heart always open to the truth so we can search for the right way and desiring always to do your Holy Will. Amen.

5. Yes, I believe that the world and my life are not the product of chance, but of eternal Reason and eternal Love, they are created by Almighty God.

Yes, I believe that in Jesus Christ, in his incarnation, in his Cross and resurrection, the face of God has been revealed;

that in him, God is present in our midst,

he unites us and leads us towards our goal, towards eternal Love.

Yes, I believe that the Holy Spirit gives us the word of truth and enlightens our hearts;

I believe that in the communion of the Church we all become one Body with the Lord, and thus we encounter his resurrection and eternal life.

(Pope Benedetto XVI)

6. O God, through the water and the Holy Spirit, you have made us being born again to eternal life, in your goodness continue to grant your blessings to your sons and daughters; keep us faithful, wherever we are, to your Church, united by a common Baptism, members of your People, confessing one faith, inherited from the Apostles, so we can give witness, in this divided world, of the unity wanted by Christ for His Church.

(Pope John Paul II)

7. Lord, give us the joy to set you in the first place: the joy of truth

Lord, give us the joy to choose according to your measure: the joy of faith.

Lord, give us a burning heart to answer to your call even when is demanding: the joy of love.

Lord, give us an intelligence that can discover with faith your plans beyond our small plans: the joy of hope.

Lord, help us to look at all creatures with your eyes, so we can be free of judgement. Make us attentive to the needs of love of our brethren so we can bring you to them.

O Lord grant us the grace to love solitude and silence so we are open to listen to your word. Amen.

8. **My God give me faith,**

the true faith, the practical faith, the faith that allows the Gospel to enter into my life.

My God give me faith,

the living faith that has its foundation on the rock and not a dead faith that builds on the sand.

My God give me faith,

a faith that helps me to meditate your words, to understand them and to put them into practice.

This I ask of you, Father, in Jesus you Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

9. **Give me eyes,** o Lord to see the needs of the world

and a heart to love the universe as You love.

Give me your light so I can recognize your signs, your presence in the brethren, your voice and your desires in them.

Lord I need you eyes: give me a living faith.

I need your heart: give me the power of your charity.

I need your breath: give me your wisdom for myself and your the Church.

Give me the capacity to do fully what you ask of me. Amen

10. **Lord we believe, but increase our faith.**

Give us the strength to overcome our selfishness,

and our narrow point of view,

so that we can be present with you

where life is created,

where love is lived out,

where the way of freedom is built,

where justice is defended

where the truth is made shining

where the space of hope are widened

to build a world united as You, God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.



Prayers to Mary, Mother of faith

11. **Mary, You are "blessed because you believed"**

Comfort us with your example and open our heart to faith.

Faithful Virgin, obtain for us the supernatural faith, the simple faith, full and strong.

A sincere and living faith, drawn from its truthful Source, the Word of God, and from its unfailing channel, the Magisterium of the Church, secured by Christ. Amen

(Pope John Paul II)

12. **O Mary, You have opened the way of faith,** help us to follow it.

We want to learn from you how to grow in faith

May the way of faith enter in us giving a clear look, helping us to discover the divine signs into the visible world.

Help us to journey in the way of faith with more enthusiasm and transform ourselves, and all around us, in wonders of God.

You knew the way of faith very well without going astray; help us to walk in it following your example.

The way of faith brought you, Mary, on high, close to God; with you, may we can continue on climbing, getting closer to God too.

(J. Galot)

13. **Holy Mary, Mother of God,**

you have given the world its true light, Jesus, your Son, the Son of God.

You abandoned yourself completely to God's call

and thus became a wellspring of the goodness which flows forth from him.

Show us Jesus. Lead us to him.

Teach us to know and love him,

so that we too can become capable of true love

and be fountains of living water in the midst of a thirsting world.

(Deus Caritas est, 42)

14. **Mary, Mother of “yes”,**

you listened to Jesus and you know the sound of His voice,
and the beating of His heart.

Star of the morning, speak to us of Him,
tell us about your journey to follow Him in the way of faith.

Mary, you lived in Nazareth with Jesus,
imprint your sentiments and your docility in our life;
grant us your silence that listens and makes fruitful the Word in choices
of freedom.

Mary, speak to us of Jesus, so that the freshness of our faith
may shine in our eyes and enkindle the heart of those who come to us,
as you have done, visiting Elizabeth, who rejoiced with you for the
gift of life.

Mary of the Magnificat,
help us to bring joy to the world and, as in Cana,
to speak to Him, to announce His Love to all. Amen.

15. **Mary, woman who knows how to rejoice,**

who knows how to exult, who allows herself to be invaded by the full
consolation of the Holy Spirit, teach us to pray so that we may also
discover the source of joy.

In Elizabeth’s house, your cousin, feeling accepted and understood in
your most intimate secret, you burst out in a hymn of exultation of the
heart, speaking of God, of you about your relationship with him, and
of the unprecedented adventure already begun of being the Mother of
Christ and of all of us, holy people of God. Teach us to give our prayer a
rhythm of hope and tremors of joy, sometimes worn out by routine and
soaked with sadness.

You, woman of a profound joy, you sang the Magnificat, in rapture and
amazed at all that the Lord was operating in his humble servant. Magnifi-
cat is the cry, the explosion of joy, which explodes within each one of us,
when our spirit sings the wonders of the Lord.

