

# *Lectio Divina* in the Year of St Paul

## Introduction

### **The Year of St Paul, 28 June 2008 – 29 June 2009**

For all Christians, whoever they may be, the celebration of a Year of St Paul timed to coincide with the approximate two thousandth anniversary of his birth, will provide the opportunity to enter more deeply into the teaching of the first great theologian of Christianity whose faith and thought have so marked our whole tradition.

### **The Apostle of the Nations**

His letters were the earliest works of our New Testament, predating the Gospels by several years. They give us an insight into the challenges of the first followers of Jesus Christ. More importantly they bear witness to the faith of a man whose life was transformed by his encounter with Christ. Paul was no paper saint: his letters, as well as the Acts of the Apostles, reveal a human being beset with difficulties and weaknesses, but one for whom Christ *who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body* (Phil 3:21) was everything.

### **Benedictines of St Paul's and *Lectio Divina***

Since the early 8<sup>th</sup> century of the Christian era, the Benedictine community of St Paul's outside the Walls in Rome has served the Basilica that enshrines the mortal remains of the Apostle. This community, living according to the Rule of St Benedict, has the practice of *lectio divina* as an integral part of its ancient spirituality. *Lectio divina* (the Latin phrase literally means "divine reading") is the prayerful pondering of the word of God in Scripture. The practice has been described under four "phases", *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio* and *contemplatio* (reading, pondering, praying and contemplating) and is undertaken on a daily basis by the monks.

### **The practice of *Lectio***

The period of time dedicated to *lectio* begins with a prayer of dedication, for example: "Lord, grant the gift of your Holy Spirit so that your love and your will may be revealed to me/us". Then the chosen passage is slowly read. The pondering may follow at once or after a second, or a third reading. A phrase may strike the reader and lead him or her into prayer; maybe that single phrase will suffice for the whole period available. Maybe the prayer will become liberated from the words, and the person be drawn into silence. The phases of *lectio divina* are not rigidly linear: a gentle spiral is a better model than a strict chronological sequence.

*Lectio divina* may be done alone or with others. If it is a daily practice, as for the monks, it is part of the slow process of transformation of the person in Christ who is the Word incarnate. If a parochial or other group wishes to do it together periodically as an inspiration for their life or work, they may add a fifth phase, *actio* or *missio*, action or mission, concluding their session with the question, "What does the Lord want concretely of us now"?

### ***Lectio* on the letters of St Paul**

The Benedictine monks of St Paul's would like to offer to all men and women of good will, to all who seek or acknowledge Christ as their Lord and Saviour, a framework of *lectio divina* for the Year of the Apostle of the Nations. We have divided the thirteen letters attributed to St Paul into 365 short texts, ranging in length from three or four to ten verses, one text for each day of the Year, starting 29 June, solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul. The order is the traditional sequence of the New Testament: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. The letter to the Hebrews, anciently linked to St Paul, has not been included. We have decided not to

address scholarly questions of authenticity, authorship etc: such questions, while important, are not directly relevant to *lectio divina*. The division of the letters into short texts may occasionally seem arbitrary, but our intention has been to propose a manageable piece of Scripture that follows in the order of the letters. There has been no attempt to match texts to liturgical feasts or seasons. If a person uses these texts each day, he or she, by the end of the Year, will have pondered and prayed on all the Pauline letters.

How long should one spend on each text? That will depend entirely on the reader's schedule, what he or she can dedicate to it. Even a short period of ten minutes has value.

We have provided no commentary. Some parts of Paul's letters are difficult, and a reader may like to find a commentary to provide background information or explanation. Such can be helpful, but is ancillary and not essential to *lectio divina*. What we offer instead is a brief introduction to each of the thirteen letters, that seeks to explain the context and point out major themes.

Although the Acts of the Apostles, attributed to St Luke, tells us much about Paul and his mission, we have not included it in our scheme. The letters too reveal the man, but, more importantly, they reveal the Man, Christ Jesus, *who did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped* (Phil 2:6), and who transformed Paul's life. Our hope and our prayer, in this Year of St Paul, is that every person who approaches the word of God present in the letters, may know and love Christ, crucified and risen, and be made alive together with him (cf Eph 2:5).

29/06	Rm 1,1-7
30/06	Rm 1,8-10
01/07	Rm 1,11-15
02/07	Rm 1,16-17
03/07	Rm 1,18-20a
04/07	Rm 1,20b-25
05/07	Rm 1,26-27
06/07	Rm 1,28-32
07/07	Rm 2,1-4
08/07	Rm 2,5-11
09/07	Rm 2,12-16
10/07	Rm 2,17-24
11/07	Rm 2,25-29
01/07	Rm 3,1-4
13/07	Rm 3,5-8
14/07	Rm 3,9-18
15/07	Rm 3,19-20
16/07	Rm 3,21-26
17/07	Rm 3,27-31
18/07	Rm 4,1-5
19/07	Rm 4,6-8
20/07	Rm 4,9-12
21/07	Rm 4,13-17
22/07	Rm 4,18-25
23/07	Rm 5,1-5
24/07	Rm 5,6-11
25/07	Rm 5,12-14
26/07	Rm 5,15-17
27/07	Rm 5,18-21
28/07	Rm 6,1-5
29/07	Rm 6,6-11
30/07	Rm 6,12-14
31/07	Rm 6,15-18
01/08	Rm 6,19-23

02/08	Rm 7,1-6
03/08	Rm 7,7-13
04/08	Rm 7,14-20
05/08	Rm 7,21-25
06/08	Rm 8,1-4
07/08	Rm 8,5-8
08/08	Rm 8,9-13
09/08	Rm 8,14-17
10/08	Rm 8,18-23
11/08	Rm 8,24-27
01/08	Rm 8,28-30
13/08	Rm 8,31-34
14/08	Rm 8,35-39
15/08	Rm 9,1-8
16/08	Rm 9,9-13
17/08	Rm 9,14-18
18/08	Rm 9,19-26
19/08	Rm 9,27-33
20/08	Rm 10,1-4
21/08	Rm 10,5-13
22/08	Rm 10,14-21
23/08	Rm 11,1-6
24/08	Rm 11,7-12
25/08	Rm 11,13-21
26/08	Rm 11,22-24
27/08	Rm 11,25-27
28/08	Rm 11,28-32
29/08	Rm 11,33-36
30/08	Rm 12,1-2
31/08	Rm 12,3-8
01/09	Rm 12,9-16
02/09	Rm 12,17-21
03/09	Rm 13,1-7
04/09	Rm 13,8-10

05/09	Rm 13,11-14
06/09	Rm 14,1-6
07/09	Rm 14,7-9
08/09	Rm 14,10-13
09/09	Rm 14,14-18
10/09	Rm 14,19-23
11/09	Rm 15,1-4
01/09	Rm 15,5-7
13/09	Rm 15,8-13
14/09	Rm 15,14-17
15/09	Rm 15,18-24
16/09	Rm 15,25-33
17/09	Rm 16,1-16
18/09	Rm 16,17-24
19/09	Rm 16,25-27
20/09	1Cor 1,1-3
21/09	1Cor 1,4-9
22/09	1Cor 1,10-17
23/09	1Cor 1,18-21
24/09	1Cor 1,22-25
25/09	1Cor 1,26-31
26/09	1Cor 2,1-5
27/09	1Cor 2,6-9
28/09	1Cor 2,10-12
29/09	1Cor 2,13-16
30/09	1Cor 3,1-3
01/10	1Cor 3,4-9
02/10	1Cor 3,10-13
03/07	1Cor 3,14-17
04/10	1Cor 3,18-23
05/10	1Cor 4,1-5
06/10	1Cor 4,6-8
07/10	1Cor 4,9-13
08/10	1Cor 4,14-21

09/10	1Cor 5,1-5
10/10	1Cor 5,6-8
11/10	1Cor 5,9-13
01/10	1Cor 6,1-6
13/10	1Cor 6,7-11
14/10	1Cor 6,12-17
15/10	1Cor 6,18-20
16/10	1Cor 7,1-7
17/10	1Cor 7,8-11
18/10	1Cor 7,12-16
19/10	1Cor 7,17-19
20/10	1Cor 7,20-24
21/10	1Cor 7,25-28
22/10	1Cor 7,29-31
23/10	1Cor 7,32-35
24/10	1Cor 7,36-40
25/10	1Cor 8,1-6
26/10	1Cor 8,7-8
27/10	1Cor 8,9-13
28/10	1Cor 9,1-6
29/10	1Cor 9,7-10
30/10	1Cor 9,11-14
31/10	1Cor 9,15-18
01/11	1Cor 9,19-23
02/11	1Cor 9,24-27
03/11	1Cor 10,1-6
04/11	1Cor 10,7-13
05/11	1Cor 10,14-17
06/11	1Cor 10,18-26
07/11	1Cor 10,27-33
08/11	1Cor 11,1-6
09/11	1Cor 11,7-16
10/11	1Cor 11,17-22
11/11	1Cor 11,23-26
01/11	1Cor 11,27-34
13/11	1Cor 12,1-3
14/11	1Cor 12,4-11
15/11	1Cor 12,12-17
16/11	1Cor 12,18-26
17/11	1Cor 12,27-31a
18/11	1Cor 12,31b; 13,1-3
19/11	1Cor 13,4-7
20/11	1Cor 13,8-13
21/11	1Cor 14,1-5
22/11	1Cor 14,6-12
23/11	1Cor 14,13-19
24/11	1Cor 14,20-25
25/11	1Cor 14,26-33a
26/11	1Cor 14,33b-36
27/11	1Cor 14,37-40
28/11	1Cor 15,1-8
29/11	1Cor 15,9-11
30/11	1Cor 15,12-19
01/12	1Cor 15,20-24
02/12	1Cor 15,25-28
03/12	1Cor 15,29-34
04/12	1Cor 15,35-41
05/12	1Cor 15,42-44
06/12	1Cor 15,45-50
07/12	1Cor 15,51-58

08/12	1Cor 16,1-4
09/12	1Cor 16,5-11
10/12	1Cor 16,12-14
11/12	1Cor 16,15-24
12/12	2Cor 1,1-5
13/12	2Cor 1,6-11
14/12	2Cor 1,12-14
15/12	2Cor 1,15-20
16/12	2Cor 1,21-24
17/12	2Cor 2,1-4
18/12	2Cor 2,5-11
19/12	2Cor 2,12-17
20/12	2Cor 3,1-6
21/12	2Cor 3,7-11
22/12	2Cor 3,12-18
23/12	2Cor 4,1-4
24/12	2Cor 4,5-6
25/12	2Cor 4,7-12
26/12	2Cor 4,13-15
27/12	2Cor 4,16-18
28/12	2Cor 5,1-5
29/12	2Cor 5,6-10
30/12	2Cor 5,11-17
31/12	2Cor 5,18-21
01/01	2Cor 6,1-2
02/01	2Cor 6,3-8a
03/01	2Cor 6,8b-13
04/01	2Cor 6,14-18
05/01	2Cor 7,1-4
06/01	2Cor 7,5-7
07/01	2Cor 7,8-13a
08/01	2Cor 7,13b-16
09/01	2Cor 8,1-6
10/01	2Cor 8,7-9
11/01	2Cor 8,10-15
12/01	2Cor 8,16-24
13/01	2Cor 9,1-5
14/01	2Cor 9,6-9
15/01	2Cor 9,10-15
16/01	2Cor 10,1-6
17/01	2Cor 10,7-12
18/01	2Cor 10,13-18
19/01	2Cor 11,1-6
20/01	2Cor 11,7-11
21/01	2Cor 11,12-15
22/01	2Cor 11,16-21a
23/01	2Cor 11,21b-27
24/01	2Cor 11,28-33
25/01	2Cor 12,1-6
26/01	2Cor 12,7-10
27/01	2Cor 12,11-15
28/01	2Cor 12,16-21
29/01	2Cor 13,1-4
30/01	2Cor 13,5-8
31/01	2Cor 13,9-14
01/02	Gal 1,1-5
02/02	Gal 1,6-10
03/02	Gal 1,11-17
04/02	Gal 1,18-24
05/02	Gal 2,1-5

06/02	Gal 2,6-10
07/02	Gal 2,11-16
08/02	Gal 2,17-21
09/02	Gal 3,1-5
10/02	Gal 3,6-9
11/02	Gal 3,10-14
12/02	Gal 3,15-18
13/02	Gal 3,19-22
14/02	Gal 3,23-29
15/02	Gal 4,1-7
16/02	Gal 4,8-14
17/02	Gal 4,15-20
18/02	Gal 4,21-26
19/02	Gal 4,27-31
20/02	Gal 5,1-6
21/02	Gal 5,7-12
22/02	Gal 5,13-17
23/02	Gal 5,18-26
24/02	Gal 6,1-5
25/02	Gal 6,6-10
26/02	Gal 6,11-18
27/02	Ef 1,1-6
28/02	Ef 1,7-10
01/03	Ef 1,11-14
02/03	Ef 1,15-19
03/03	Ef 1,20-23
04/03	Ef 2,1-5
05/03	Ef 2,6-10
06/03	Ef 2,11-13
07/03	Ef 2,14-18
08/03	Ef 2,19-22
09/03	Ef 3,1-7
10/03	Ef 3,8-12
11/03	Ef 3,13-16
12/03	Ef 3,17-21
13/03	Ef 4,1-6
14/03	Ef 4,7-10
15/03	Ef 4,11-13
16/03	Ef 4,14-16
17/03	Ef 4,17-24
18/03	Ef 4,25-32
19/03	Ef 5,1-5
20/03	Ef 5,6-10
21/03	Ef 5,11-14
22/03	Ef 5,15-20
23/03	Ef 5,21-27
24/03	Ef 5,28-33
25/03	Ef 6,1-4
26/03	Ef 6,5-9
27/03	Ef 6,10-17
28/03	Ef 6,18-20
29/03	Ef 6,21-24
30/03	Fil 1,1-6
31/03	Fil 1,7-11
01/04	Fil 1,12-14
02/04	Fil 1,15-20
03/04	Fil 1,21-26
04/04	Fil 1,27-30
05/04	Fil 2,1-4
06/04	Fil 2,5-11

07/04	Fil 2,12-18
08/04	Fil 2,19-24
09/04	Fil 2,25-30
10/04	Fil 3,1-7
11/04	Fil 3,8-11
12/04	Fil 3,12-16
13/04	Fil 3,17-21
14/04	Fil 4,1-3
15/04	Fil 4,4-9
16/04	Fil 4,10-13
17/04	Fil 4,14-23
18/04	Col 1,1-8
19/04	Col 1,9-12
20/04	Col 1,13-20
21/04	Col 1,21-23
22/04	Col 1,24-29
23/04	Col 2,1-8
24/04	Col 2,9-15
25/04	Col 2,16-23
26/04	Col 3,1-4
27/04	Col 3,5-11
28/04	Col 3,12-17
29/04	Col 3,18-25; 4,1
30/04	Col 4,2-9
01/05	Col 4,10-18
02/05	1Ts 1,1-10
03/05	1Ts 2,1-8
04/05	1Ts 2,9-13

05/05	1Ts 2,14-20
06/05	1Ts 3,1-5
07/05	1Ts 3,6-10
08/05	1Ts 3,11-13
09/05	1Ts 4,1-8
10/05	1Ts 4,9-12
11/05	1Ts 4,13-18
12/05	1Ts 5,1-6
13/05	1Ts 5,7-11
14/05	1Ts 5,12-28
15/05	2Ts 1,1-10
16/05	2Ts 1,11-12;2,1-2
17/05	2Ts 2,3-12
18/05	2Ts 2,13-17
19/05	2Ts 3,1-5
20/05	2Ts 3,6-10
21/05	2Ts 3,11-18
22/05	1Tm 1,1-7
23/05	1Tm 1,8-14
24/05	1Tm 1,15-20
25/05	1Tm 2,1-7
26/05	1Tm 2, 8-15
27/05	1Tm 3,1-7
28/05	1Tm 3,8-13
29/05	1Tm 3,14-16
30/05	1Tm 4,1-7a
31/05	1Tm 4,7b-16
01/06	1Tm 5,1-8

02/06	1Tm 5,9-16
03/06	1Tm 5,17-24
04/06	1Tm 6,1-5
05/06	1Tm 6,6-12
06/06	1Tm 6,13-16
07/06	1Tm 6,17-21
08/06	2Tm 1,1-6
09/06	2Tm 1,7-12
10/06	2Tm 1,13-18
11/06	2Tm 2,1-7
12/06	2Tm 2,8-13
13/06	2Tm 2,14-19
14/06	2Tm 2,20-26
15/06	2Tm 3,1-9
16/06	2Tm 3,10-17
17/06	2Tm 4,1-8
18/06	2Tm 4,9-15
19/06	2Tm 4,16-22
20/06	Tt 1,1-9
21/06	Tt 1,10-16
22/06	Tt 2,1-5
23/06	Tt 2,6-10
24/06	Tt 2,11-15
25/06	Tt 3,1-7
26/06	Tt 3,8-15
27/06	Fm 1,1-12
28/06	Fm 1,13-25

