

**We share the Congregational Charism
with the laity
for a vital communion in the Church**



Lectio divina

2009 - 2010

Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart

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with the laity
for a vital communion in the Church

LITURGICAL YEAR 2009-10

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit
there are different forms of service but the same Lord
there are different workings but the same God
who produces all of them in everyone” (1 Cor 12,4)

Dearest Sisters,

the Word of God accompanies us daily in our life and mission, enlightening our every action and thought. In this Liturgical year 2009-2010, the Congregational programme invites us to meditate on the Word of God, with the aim of reflecting upon the needed *“sharing of the charism with the laity for a vital communion within the Church”*.

We are aware that the charism is not an exclusive gift given to the Franciscan Family, or to our Institute, but a gift of the Spirit to the Church, so that all men are acquainted with the salvation worked by Jesus Christ. Indeed, it is the Spirit who elicits the will to follow Christ in the founders, makes them draw from the Gospel the Word that enlightens their life and blazes a new trail in the Church in order to build up the Kingdom of God in every man.

Therefore, we all share in a special gift bestowed by the Spirit and bequeathed by our Founders, Laura Leroux and Father Gregory, and we are called to make it bear fruit in our evangelizing mission.

In all our communities around the world we are supported by laypeople, who help us and offer their cooperation in various ways. Our relationships are characterized by the spirit of communion which is typically Franciscan and proper to our religious Family.

The document *“Vita Consecrata”* tells us explicitly that *“the different members of the Church can and must unite their efforts, with a view to cooperation and exchange of gifts, in order to participate more effectively in the Church’s mission”* and further states that *“these new experiences of communion and cooperation can give rise to the spread of a fruitful spirituality beyond the confines of the Institute, and that the participation of the laity often brings unexpected and rich insights into certain aspects of the charism, leading to a more spiritual*

interpretation of it and helping to draw from it directions for new activities in the apostolate” (nos. 54 and 55).

In whatever activity or ministry we are involved as consecrated persons, the Church entrusts us with the task of cultivating *“the most precious gift: the spirit, while the laity should offer Religious families the invaluable contribution of their “being in the world” and their specific service.”* (VC 55).

The texts of this year’s Lectio Divina are a suggestion to meditate together on the Word of God and respond to the requests of the Church regarding the objective of the Congregational programme. The passages chosen from the Holy Scripture emphasize communion within the Church as a gift of the Spirit for building up the one Body of Christ; the passages taken from the teachings of the Church highlight the contribution of consecrated life to the Church’s mission, the spirit of communion and the style of sharing, so that our life can be a true prophetic sign of Trinitarian Life, into which every man is called to take part.

The communal Lectio Divina, which entails listening to the Word of God and obeying meekly and docilely to the teachings of the Church, shall lead us to perceive the heart of the Mystery of the Church and spread around us that special atmosphere of communion which helps the whole Christian community feel being the Family of the children of God.

I wish that every one of you treasures every fragment of the Word of God, so that it becomes food for our union with Jesus Christ and I hope that the communal Lectio Divina nourishes the spirit of fraternity, the sense of belonging to the Church and the evangelizing mission that are entrusted to every sister.

Fraternal greetings,



Suor Emma Pia Bottamedi
Superior general

1st November 2009
Solemnity of All Saints

OUTLINE

FOR THE LECTIO DIVINA



SOURCES OF REFERENCE

– WORD OF GOD

– DOCUMENTS OF THE CHURCH

EWC	Evangelization and Witness of Charity,	1990
FLC	Fraternal Life in Community	1994
CL	Consecrated Life	1996
SC	Starting afresh from Christ	2002
DCE	Deus caritas est	2006
SAO	The Service of Authority and Obedience	2008
CV	Caritas in Veritate	2009

	WORD OF GOD
P A R T I	<p>“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ”. (1 Jn 1,3)</p> <p>“You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God”. (2 Co 3, 2-3)</p>
P A R T II	<p>“Dear friends, I urge you... live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us”. (1 P 2, 11)</p> <p>“Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God’s grace... Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm”. (2 Co 1, 12; 24)</p>

CHURCH DOCUMENTS
<p>The Eucharist draws us into Jesus’ act of self oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate Logos, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving... It had meant standing in God’s presence, but now it becomes union with God through sharing in Jesus’ self-gift, sharing in his body and blood... Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. (DCE 13 and 14)</p>
<p>To the extent that one knows how to sign and transparency of God’s love, opens minds and hearts proclaiming the Word of truth. Desire for authenticity and concreteness, the man of today appreciate more the witnesses than to teachers, and usually only after being reached by the tangible sign of the charity is guided to discover the depth and the needs of God’s love. (EWC 24)</p> <p>Consecrated persons are being asked to bear witness everywhere with the boldness of a prophet... prophecy derives a particularly persuasive power from consistency between proclamation and life. Consecrated persons will be faithful to their mission in the Church and the world, if they can renew themselves constantly in the light of the word of God. (CL 85)</p>

	WORD OF GOD
P A R T III	<p>“The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is’, because the kingdom of God is within you. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it’”. <i>(Lk 17, 20-22)</i></p> <p>“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience... Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess... And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, but all the more let us encourage one another”. <i>(Heb 10, 19-25)</i></p>
P A R T IV	<p>“You will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit... and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God”. <i>(Ep 3, 4-5; 9-10)</i></p> <p>“If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin”. <i>(1 Jn 1, 6-7)</i></p>

CHURCH DOCUMENTS
<p>Conciliar ecclesiology has shed light on the complementarity of the different vocations in the Church which are called to be, together in every situation and place, witnesses of the Risen Lord... Appropriate contact between the values characteristic of the lay vocation, (such as more concrete perception of the life of the world, of culture, politics) and the values characteristic of religious life can become a fruitful exchange of gifts... It is necessary to have religious communities with a clear charismatic identity, assimilated and lived, capable of transmitting them to others and disposed to share them; religious communities with an intense spirituality and missionary enthusiasm for communicating the same spirit and the same evangelizing thrust... In this way, a religious community becomes a center radiating outwardly, a spiritual force, a center of animation, of fraternity creating fraternity, and of communion and ecclesial collaboration. <i>(FLC 70)</i></p>
<p>We can find an important indication in the song of Songs: the experience of a love which involves a real discovery of the other, moving beyond the selfish character that prevailed earlier. Love now becomes concern and care for the other. No longer it is self-seeking, a sinking in the intoxication of happiness; instead it seeks the good of the other: it becomes renunciation and it is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice... love is indeed “ecstasy”, as a journey, ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God. <i>(DCE 6)</i></p>

	WORD OF GOD
P A R T V	<p>“Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.....and they will continue their journey together...”. <i>(Rt 1, 16-17, 19)</i></p> <p>“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible... To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings”. <i>(1 Co 9, 19-23)</i></p>
P A R T VI	<p>“Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” <i>(Mt 18, 19)</i></p> <p>“The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel...But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. No one can deprive me of this boast. Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” <i>(1 Co 9, 14-16)</i></p>

CHURCH DOCUMENTS
<p>In the Consecrated Life relationship within the whole Christian Community are improving with a mutual and complementary interchange of gifts among the various ecclesial vocations... From simple formal relationships one willingly moves to a communion lived in mutual charismatic enrichment. This effort can be helpful to all God’s people, since the spirituality of communion supplies institutional reality with a soul by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with the dignity and responsibility of every baptized person. <i>(SC 7)</i></p>
<p>Without an interior life of love which draws the Word, the Father, and the Spirit to itself, an outlook of faith is impossible. As a consequence life itself loses meaning; the faces of brothers and sisters are obscured and it becomes impossible to recognize the face of God in them... An authentic spiritual life requires that everyone, in all the diverse vocations, regularly dedicate appropriate times every day to enter deeply into silent conversation with him by whom they know they are loved, to share their very lives with him and to receive enlightenment to continue on the daily journey. It is an exercise which requires fidelity, because we are constantly being bombarded by the estrangements and excesses. <i>(SC 25)</i></p>

	WORD OF GOD
P A R T VII	<p>“You, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt, and save them...” <i>(Jude 1, 20-23)</i></p> <p>“Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things... so that no one may boast before him... who has become for us wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption”. <i>(1 Co 1, 26-30)</i></p>
P A R T VIII	<p>“Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and he said: “Who am I, O Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?... You have established your people Israel as your very own forever, and you, O Lord, have become their God” . <i>(2 S 7, 18-24)</i></p> <p>“Our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant not of the letter but of the Spirit... Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face... Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom”. <i>(2 Co 3, 5-6, 12-13, 17)</i></p>

CHURCH DOCUMENTS
<p>The consecrated life, through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, constitutes a closer imitation and an abiding re-enactment in the Church of the way of life which Jesus, the supreme consecrated one and missionary of the Father for the sake of his Kingdom, embraced and proposed to his disciples... Accepting his consecration by the Father, the Son in turn consecrates himself to the Father for the sake of humanity. His life of virginity, obedience and poverty expresses his complete filial acceptance of the Father’s plan. His perfect offering confers an aspect of consecration upon all the events of his earthly existence...The consecrated life truly constitutes a living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting as the incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren. It is a living tradition of the Savior’s life and message. <i>(CL 22)</i></p>
<p>It is sure to preach the gospel, as well as for dialogue, it requires a strong and clear awareness of its Christian identity and religious identity, and the certainty of truth that is revealed to us and that we are taught by the Church. Who wants to announce and talk can only do it from personal encounter with Christ and a life deeply engaged in the experience of Christian community. <i>(EWC 33)</i></p> <p>Starting afresh from Christ means following him where he has made himself present in the work of salvation and living within the vast horizons opened by him... There is an urgent need for consecrated persons to give more space in their lives to ecumenical prayer and genuine evangelical witness, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit the walls of division and prejudice among Christians can be broken down...The missionary obligation does not stop us from entering into dialogue with others fully open to receive, to gather the seeds of the Word, in which they encounter precious values for their life and mission. <i>(SC 40,41,44)</i></p>

	WORD OF GOD
P A R T IX	<p>“Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying?...If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me... So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church”. <i>(1 Co 14, 9-12)</i></p> <p>“As you come to him, the living Stone rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God... But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him”. <i>(1 P 2, 4-5, 9)</i></p>
P A R T X	<p>“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements... The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers”. <i>(Ac 15, 28, 30-32)</i></p> <p>“Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain... Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything. <i>(1 Co 15, 57-58; 16,13-14)</i></p>

CHURCH DOCUMENTS
<p>Charity in truth places man before the astonishing experience of gift... The human being is made for gift which expresses and makes present his transcendent dimension... Hope encourages reason and gives it the strength to direct the will. As the absolutely gratuitous gift of God, hope burst into our lives as something not due to us, something that transcends every law of justice. Gift by its nature goes beyond merit. Because it is a gift received by everyone, charity in truth is a force that builds community, it brings all people together without imposing barriers or limits... but by ourselves can never, purely by its own strength, be a fully fraternal community: a fraternal communion transcending every barrier, is called into being by the word of God who is Love. <i>(CV 34)</i></p>
<p>The command to love one another experienced in the internal life of the community must be transferred from the personal level to that of the different ecclesial realities... The new phenomenon being experienced in these days is that some members of the laity are asking to participate in the charismatic ideals of institutes...where as at times in the recent past, collaboration came about as a means of supplementing the decline of consecrated persons necessary to carry out activities, now it is growing out of the need to share responsibility... especially in the hope sharing specific aspects and moments of the spirituality and mission... In this new climate they can once again find the just relationships of communion and a renewed experience of evangelical communion and mutual Charismatic esteem resulting in a complementarity which respects the differences. <i>(SC 31)</i></p>

	WORD OF GOD
P A R T XI	<p>"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Then they returned to Jerusalem from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were usually reunited...They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers". <i>(Ac 1, 7-8, 11, 14)</i></p> <p>"This is the will of God: your sanctification... you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers...Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more. Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands". <i>(1 Th 4, 3; 4, 10-11)</i></p>
P A R T XII	<p>"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us... Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited". <i>(Rm 12, 4-6, 16)</i></p> <p>"For if we are captured, all Judea will be captured and our sanctuary will be plundered and he will make us pay for us... Therefore, let us set an example to our kindred, for their lives depend upon us and the sanctuary – both the temple and the altar – rests upon us". <i>(Jdt 8, 21, 24)</i></p>

CHURCH DOCUMENTS
<p>The religious community has felt itself to be in continuity with the group of those who follow Jesus... In the various forms it takes, fraternal life in common has always appeared as a radical expression of the common fraternal spirit which unites all Christians. Religious community is a visible manifestation of the communion which is the foundation of the Church, and at the same time, a prophecy of that unity towards which she tends as her final goal. As "experts in communion", religious are, therefore, called to be an ecclesial community in the Church and in the world, witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God's design. <i>(FLC 10)</i></p>
<p>The spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling within us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the faces of the brothers and sisters around us... also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical body, and therefore as those who are a part of me. Some consequences of feeling and doing derive from this principal with convincing logic... The spirituality of communion also implies the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and to prize it as a gift from God, and to know how to make room for others, sharing each other's burdens. <i>(SC 29)</i></p>

	WORD OF GOD
P A R T XIII	<p>“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows... Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers”.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Ga 6, 7-10)</i></p> <p>“I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name... Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth”.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Rv 3,8-10)</i></p>
P A R T XIV	<p>“When he received the portions from the hands of the priests, as he stood by the hearth of the altar with a garland of brothers around him, he was like a young cedar on Lebanon... All the sons of Aaron in their splendor held the Lord’s offering in their hands before the whole congregation... Then all the people together quickly fell to the ground on their faces to worship the Lord, the Almighty, God Most High”.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Si 50, 12-18)</i></p> <p>“When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. Then Peter got up and addressed them: God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith”.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Ac 15, 4, 7-9)</i></p>

CHURCH DOCUMENTS
<p>Expectation is anything but passive, it expresses itself in work and mission, that the Kingdom may become present here and now through the spirit of the Beatitudes, a spirit capable of giving rise in human society to effective aspirations for justice, peace, solidarity and forgiveness... Those who vigilantly await the fulfillment of Christ’s promise are able to bring hope to their brothers and sisters who are often discouraged and pessimistic about the future. Theirs is a hope founded on God’s promise contained in the revealed word: the history of humanity is moving toward a new heaven and a new earth.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(CL 27)</i></p>
<p>The spirituality of communion present itself as the spiritual climate of the Church at the beginning of the Third Millennium and, therefore, an active and exemplary task of religious life. It is the main pathway for the future of a believing life and of Christian witness. Community holiness is a convincing witness that it shows the perennial value of unity, a gift left by the Lord Jesus.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(SAO 19)</i></p> <p>Communion originates precisely in sharing of faith and in faith where the more we share those things which are central and vital, the more the fraternal bond grows in strength. This kind of communication can also be helpful as a way of learning a style of sharing which will enable members in their apostolate to confess their faith in simple and easy terms which all may understand and appreciate.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(FLC 32)</i></p>

	WORD OF GOD
P A R T XV	<p>"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...Whatever your task, put yourselves into it as done for the Lord and not for your masters...you serve the Lord Christ... Conduct yourselves wisely, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone". <i>(Col 3, 16; 3, 23-24; 4, 5-6)</i></p> <p>"I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us?". <i>(Dt 4,5-6)</i></p>
P A R T XVI	<p>"No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him". <i>(Lk 8, 16-18)</i></p> <p>"Since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God... For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake". <i>(2 Co 4, 1-2; 4, 5)</i></p>

CHURCH DOCUMENTS
<p>The fraternal life is the privileged place in which to discern and accept God's will and to walk together with one mind and one heart. Obedience, enlivened by charity, unites the members of an institute in the same witness and the same mission, while respecting the diversity of gifts and individual... Life in community is thus a sign before the Church and society, of the bond which comes from the same call and the common desire to be obedient to that call. Contrary to the spirit of discord and division, authority and obedience shine like a sign of that unique fatherhood which comes from God, of the brotherhood born of the spirit, of the interior freedom of those who put their trust in God. <i>(CL 92)</i></p>
<p>As a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations. The more authentically he or she lives these relations, the more his or her own personal identity matures... The theme of development can be identified with the inclusion-in-relation of all individuals and peoples within the one community of the human family, built in solidarity on the basis of the fundamental values of justice and peace. This perspective is illuminated in a striking way by the relationship between the persons of the Trinity within the one divine Substance... The reciprocal transparency among the divine persons is total and the bond between each of them complete. God desires to incorporate us into this reality of communion as well. The Church is a sign and instrument of this unity. <i>(CV 53,54)</i></p>

	WORD OF GOD
P A R T XVII	<p>"Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" .</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ex 19, 3-6)</p> <p>"Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life".</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Co 2, 14-15)</p>
P A R T XVIII	<p>"As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain... Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; ...in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; ...in truthful speech and in the power of God".</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Co 6, 1-7)</p> <p>"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers... Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything".</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Jn 3,16-20)</p>

CHURCH DOCUMENTS
<p>To seek the will of God means to seek a friendly and benevolent will, which desires our fulfillment, that desires above all, a free response in love to its love, in order to make of us instruments of divine love. It is along this <i>via amoris</i> that the flower of listening and obedience blooms... The Spirit opens each one to the Reign of God, while maintaining his or her different gifts and roles. Obedience to the action of the Spirit unifies the community in its witness to his presence, makes the steps of all joyful and becomes the basis of community life. The search for the will of God and the willingness to carry it out is the spiritual cement that saves the group from the fragmentation that can arise from the great variety of persons.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(SAO 4 and 18)</p>
<p>The love of God and love of neighbor is so closely connected and it is explicitly demanded that our love of God becomes a lie if we are closed to our neighbor... In the gradual unfolding of this encounter, it is clearly revealed that love is not merely a sentiment... this encounter also engages our will and our intellect... But this process is always open-ended; love is never finished and complete; throughout life, it changes and matures, and thus remains faithful to itself ... This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will. Then I learn to look on this other person from the perspective of Jesus Christ.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(DCE 16, 17, 18)</p>



PRAYERS

Prayer at the beginning of Lectio divina

*Lord Jesus, the Son of the living God,
the Word made flesh that enlightens every man,
teach me to listen to what you say to me
in Sacred Scripture
and to discover your true face and that of your Father.
Amen.*

Prayer at the conclusion of Lectio divina

*Lord Jesus, Son of the living God,
come to me and bring fulfilment of the divine light
which I received from Sacred Scriptures.
Teach me to be pure transparency of you
in any act of my life.
Amen.*

1 - Holy Spirit, source of graces,
 bring to fulfilment our identity
 of Franciscan Missionaries of the Sacred Heart,
 Holy Spirit, source of love,
 make us capable of entering into the sacred wound
 of the Heart of Jesus Crucified,
 Holy Spirit, seal of unity,
 give us the grace to live in fraternal communion,
 Holy Spirit, prophetic chrism,
 revive in our heart the missionary ardour.
 Holy Spirit, Love of the Father and of the Son,
 make us share in the Trinitarian holiness. Amen!

(Prayer inspired by the Our Father of Francis of Assisi)

2 - O Our Father most holy:
 Our Creator, Redeemer, Consoler and Savior.
 Your will be done on earth as in heaven:
 That we may love You with our heart by always thinking of You,
 with our whole soul by always desiring You;
 with our whole mind by always directing all our intentions to You,
 and by seeking Your glory in everything;
 with all our whole strength by exerting
 all our energies and affections of body and soul
 in the service of Your love and of nothing else;
 and we may love our neighbor as ourselves
 by drawing them all to Your love with our whole strength,
 by rejoicing in the good of others as in our own,
 by suffering with others at their misfortunes,
 and by giving offense to no one. Amen.

3 - Lord Jesus, we thank you
 for calling us to follow you through this religious family.
 Give us the grace to revive the virtues
 with which our Founders wanted us to be identified:
 a practical faith in your loving presence,
 a spirit of simple and joyous minority,
 an attitude of meekness and modesty,
 a genuine fraternal service,
 an ardent availability for your reign of love.
 We ask this through the intercession of our Holy Protectors. Amen.

5 - Sacred Heart of Jesus, the perfect image of God the Father,
 full of mercy,
 we bless you for all the graces you have granted to your people.
 Strengthen the faith, hope and charity
 of those you have called to know the love of God in truth.
 Continue to pour out in them this love
 which gives them a filial attitude towards the heavenly Father.
 Grant all the desire to purify their hearts
 in order to make it transparent to the Gospel,
 give them a burning desire to develop in them the life of God.
 Jesus, gentle and humble of heart,
 console those who are tired,
 make everyone aware of one's own original vocation.
 Extend your charity incessantly
 to the dimension of that benevolent and inexhaustible love, without limit,
 which your divine heart has never ceased to express to the people.
 Inflame in them the fire that you have brought on earth,
 that they participate always more
 in the works of redemption which you have completed for them
 on the cross at the prize of your blood.
 That they continue their journey towards the fullness of life
 to which we are drawn to meet face to face in heaven. Amen.

6 - We pray to you to send holy priests to your Church
 who sanctify your people with the help of your grace.
 Send many consecrated men and women,
 that they may show your holiness in the midst of the world.
 Send holy labourers in your vineyard,
 that they may work with the ardour of charity
 and encouraged by the Holy spirit
 they may bring the salvation of Christ to the ends of the earth. Amen.

7 - Mary, Mother of yes, you who have listened Jesus,
*you know the tone of his voice and the beat of his heart,
Morning Star, speak to us of him and narrate us your journey
to follow him in the path of faith.*

*Mary, who have lived in Nazareth with Jesus,
imprint in our life your feelings, your docility,
your silence that listens
and makes blossom the Word in choices of true freedom.*

*Mary, tell us about Jesus because the freshness
of our faith shine in our eyes
and warm the heart of whom we meet,
as you have done visiting Elizabeth
who in her old age has rejoiced with you for the gift of life.*

*Mary, Virgin of the Magnificat,
help us to bring joy into the world and as at Cana,
inspire every young person to be involved in the service
to the brethren, to do only what Jesus says.*

*Mary, gate of heaven, help us to lift our gaze on high.
We wish to see Jesus, to talk about Him,
to proclaim to all His Love! Amen.*

(Benedict XVI)