



**AN INVITATION TO
LENTEN LECTIO DIVINA
2021**

**THE DAILY GOSPELS OF LENT
FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER**

**WIITH INTRODUCTORY EXPLANATION
OF LECTIO DIVINA**

**Fr. Gael E Sullivan, SDB
Sts. Peter & Paul Church
San Francisco, CA 94133**

Contents

INTRODUCTION	3	FRIDAY, MAR 12	53
AMERICA	4	SATURDAY, MAR 13	55
ASH WEDNESDAY, FEB 17	7	SUNDAY, MAR 14	57
THURSDAY, FEB 18	9	MONDAY, MAR 15	59
FRIDAY, FEB 19	11	TUESDAY, MAR 16	61
SATURDAY, FEB 20	13	WEDNESDAY, MAR 17	63
SUNDAY, FEB 21	15	THURSDAY, MAR 18	65
MONDAY, FEB 22	17	FRIDAY, ST. JOSEPH, MAR 19	67
TUESDAY, FEB 23	19	SATURDAY, MAR 20	69
WEDNESDAY, FEB 24	21	SUNDAY, MAR 21	71
THURSDAY, FEB 25	23	MONDAY, MAR 22	73
FRIDAY, FEB 26	25	TUESDAY, MAR 23	75
SATURDAY, FEB 27	27	WEDNESDAY, MAR 24	77
SUNDAY, FEB 28	29	THURSDAY, MAR 25	79
MONDAY, MAR 1	31	FRIDAY, MAR 26	81
TUESDAY, MAR 2	33	SATURDAY, MAR 27	83
WEDNESDAY, MAR 3	35	SUNDAY, MAR 28 PALM SUNDAY	85
THURSDAY, MAR 4	37	MONDAY, MAR 29	87
FRIDAY, MAR 5	39	TUESDAY, MAR 30	89
SATURDAY, MAR 6	41	WEDNESDAY, MAR 31	91
SUNDAY, MAR 7	43	HOLY THURSDAY, APR 1	93
MONDAY, MAR 8	45	GOOD FRIDAY, APR 2	95
TUESDAY, MAR 9	47	SATURDAY, APR 3, EASTER VIGIL MASS	97
WEDNESDAY, MAR 10	49	SUNDAY, EASTER SUNCAY, APR 4	99
THURSDAY, MAR 11	51		

INTRODUCTION

Lent 2021

Dear Friends,

We are beginning our second Lent under the restraints of the pandemic. It has been a difficult time for all of us. Our minds and hearts carry the loss of so many people, the closure of places of worship to give us the comfort the practice of faith affords us.

Throughout the centuries the pastoral life and practice of the Church have given us traditions and practices that give expression to our deep spiritual needs: Devotion to Mother Mary and the Saints, the recitation of the Rosary, and many other practices of devotion.

Among those practices is centuries old one of "Lectio Divina", which means "Divine Reading". It is the practice of reading Holy Scripture in a measured reflective way. It invites us to read scripture in a much deeper way, to connect with scripture in a more personal way. While it is called Lectio Divina, the reading is a meditative process. The scripture of the day is slowly read four times, each time with a particular focus. There are a number of variants of the method.

The one chosen here encourages us to engage with four key words: **READ, REFLECT, REST AND RESPOND**. An explanatory diagram is provided with each day's scripture indicating what is done in each of the four steps (and also an article on Lectio Divina). This is meant to help us to engage fully in the dynamic of Lectio Divina.

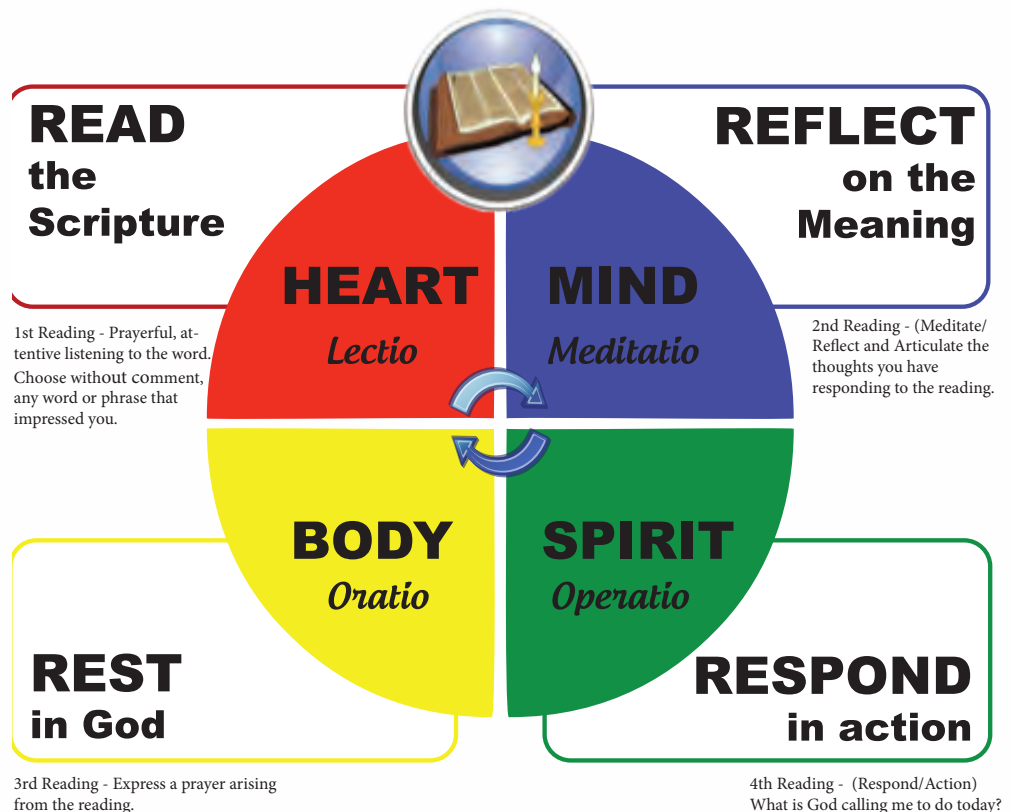
It can be done individually or in a group setting. Both are valid. Of course, doing it in a group provides a "faith sharing" dynamic which is mutually enriching and allows to identify in our own spirituality what others are experiencing.

This offered with the hope that it will be a help to us in these times where we all need a little extra help. It might even lead us to continue with the practice after Lent and Easter 2021 have passed. Let's unite in prayer over the scripture.

Sincerely,

Gael E. Sullivan, S.D.B.

Fr. Gael E. Sullivan, S.D.B.
Sts. Peter & Paul Church
San Francisco, CA 94133



AMERICA

September 29 , 2008 (Vol. 199 No.9, Whole No. 4828)

Ever Ancient, Ever New: Lectio divina is not just for monastics anymore.

By John B. Klassen | SEPTEMBER 29, 2008

In writing this short reflection on lectio divina in relationship to the coming Synod of Bishops, I was again forcefully reminded of the great watershed that the Second Vatican Council has been for Roman Catholics and for all other Christian churches. For 400 years following the Counter-Reformation, the church hesitated to make the Scriptures accessible to lay women and men out of fear that the biblical text might be misinterpreted because of a lack of proper tools or methods for approaching it.

With the creation and publication of the “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation” (Dei Verbum), the church changed course and once again urged the faithful to return to the Scriptures as a source of spiritual nourishment. “Let all the Christian faithful learn ‘the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ’ (Phil 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine scriptures. ‘Ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ’” (Dei Verbum No. 25). The constitution also acknowledges the importance of prayer when reading the biblical text, so that the dialogical character of this practice is apparent.

There is, however, no explicit mention of the practice of lectio divina. By contrast, the working paper (instrumentum laboris) for the synod devotes a whole section (No. 38) to lectio divina. What a difference 43 years make!

What is Lectio Divina?

Lectio divina is reading a passage from the Scriptures several times in a slow, reflective manner, either alone or within a group. Usually the text is read out loud so that words can be savored, phrases can receive their full value and the flow of the text can be discerned. The reading is followed by a period of silence, in which one can focus on a word or a phrase that resonates strongly. The text is read out loud again: if in a group, a different reader voices it. Again it is followed by a period of silence. I usually use this time to reflect on what grace might be in the words or phrase that struck me. Others may choose to place this in the person of Christ. The text is read a third time, followed by a period of silence and the question, “What is this text asking me to do?” This point in the process provides a rich opportunity for prayer: for oneself, for the church, for another member of the group, for the needs of people of our time. Finally and importantly, there is time to rest in silent contemplation, to imagine to oneself resting in God’s love.

Lectio divina is a Spirit-filled practice for encountering the mystery of God in the Scriptures, in part because it is utterly simple and flexible. Since there is no one right way to do it, groups and individuals will need to explore and to trust their own intuitions about what is most appropriate for them. Lectio divina is not a technique. Rather, it is an engagement between the meaning of the text and the narrative of God’s saving action in one’s own life. This engagement is sensory: reading, listening, sensing the words, breathing, being silent, dwelling, praying and being silent again. It takes time.

Certainly, the practice is powerful because it goes against the grain of contemporary culture. So much of our world is driving, hammering, shouting, screeching, clamoring for attention, ramping things up for one exaggeration after another. The engine of continuous, expanding consumption uses excess stimulation and noise for fuel. Like the plant in “Little Shop of Horrors” that needs ever more fresh human blood in order to live, so a consumption economy needs speed, noise, hype, impulsive buying and using things up in order to live.

Much in the contemporary world is truly outstanding, of course. We need to love our world as much as God does in creating it, in sending the Word to become flesh, in blessing it with the Holy Spirit. As the monastic writer Michael Casey points out, lectio divina is a low-pitched daily practice that allows for the gradual uncovering of our egocentrism and its transformation into other-centered living by the Holy Spirit. This kind of self-awareness, which does not collapse into egocentrism, is hard to come

Useful Examples

Teachers in some Catholic elementary schools have begun to use *lectio divina* in the classroom. One third-grade class practices it every Monday and Wednesday, as the teacher invites the students to assume a prone position on the floor during a 15-minute session. With a group of very young learners, a teacher might play meditative music in the background as they quiet down. A short passage from the Scriptures is read and the usual group process for *lectio* is followed. These young students find that *lectio divina* helps them to quiet down (“It feels as if God is right beside you the whole day after you do *lectio*”), and they learn something about the Scriptures (“You feel like you were there in the Bible story”).

Some elementary-grade teachers who have used *lectio divina* acknowledge that at first they did not think it would work; they doubted that their young charges would be able to settle down and focus on the text. Most of the time, however, they could, which is what most adults also experience with *lectio*. What matters is perseverance, trusting the Spirit to help one learn to listen while one attends prayerfully to the text.

A Benedictine school in Chile has prominently put a Bible on a stand in every classroom. Students practice group *lectio divina* at the beginning of every day, using a general ritual, but with enough freedom to foster the creativity and imagination of students. To be sure, the approach grows in sophistication as students move through the grade levels. There are no Benedictine monastics in this school. Lay women and men have worked to introduce Benedictine values and practices into the school’s entire program, and *lectio* is central to that effort.

Still other groups are exploring the use of a combination of *lectio divina* (holy reading) and *visio divina* (holy looking). Since most people are visual learners, *visio divina* taps into their visual archive of memory to provide an immediate entree into their life experience. In this example, an Episcopalian pastor created a Lenten program for groups. Each Sunday a passage from the Lenten Gospels was chosen and members of the group did individual *lectio divina* with it over the next three days. On Thursday, the group came together for a group *lectio* session; then they explored the layers of meaning by looking at an illumination of the text from the Saint John’s Bible (a new richly illustrated Bible being produced by artists in Collegeville, Minn.). This combination of intensive individual *lectio*, followed by group reflection and interaction with a multilayered illumination proved to be a rich, prayerful and imagination-opening experience.

Clearly, *lectio divina* is not just for monastics anymore.

Why Does Lectio Divina Matter?

As the synod’s *instrumentum laboris* notes: “*lectio divina* is not confined to a few, well-committed individuals among the faithful nor to a group of specialists in prayer. Instead, *lectio* is a necessary element of an authentic Christian life in a secularized world, which needs contemplative, attentive, critical and courageous people who, at times, must make totally new, untried choices.” This is a strong statement. *Lectio divina* matters because it provides a contemplative, Scripture-based foundation for a thoughtful Christian response to our world. This response comes as Scripture touches human experience with the “mysterious stirring” of the Holy Spirit. By making the Scriptures more accessible to lay men and women, the church has provided a powerful source for spiritual growth and transformation.

In particular, group *lectio* has a powerful, unique impact because faith-sharing is implicit in the practice. As Christians we can draw enormous encouragement, hope, insight and courage from listening to the witness of another’s lived faith experience. By praying out of our own lives for the good of another in response to the biblical word, our hearts expand—we long for holiness and for unity with each other and with Christ.



“The ashes mean I am a sinner. The shape of the cross means I have a Savior!”

Fr. Mike Schmitz

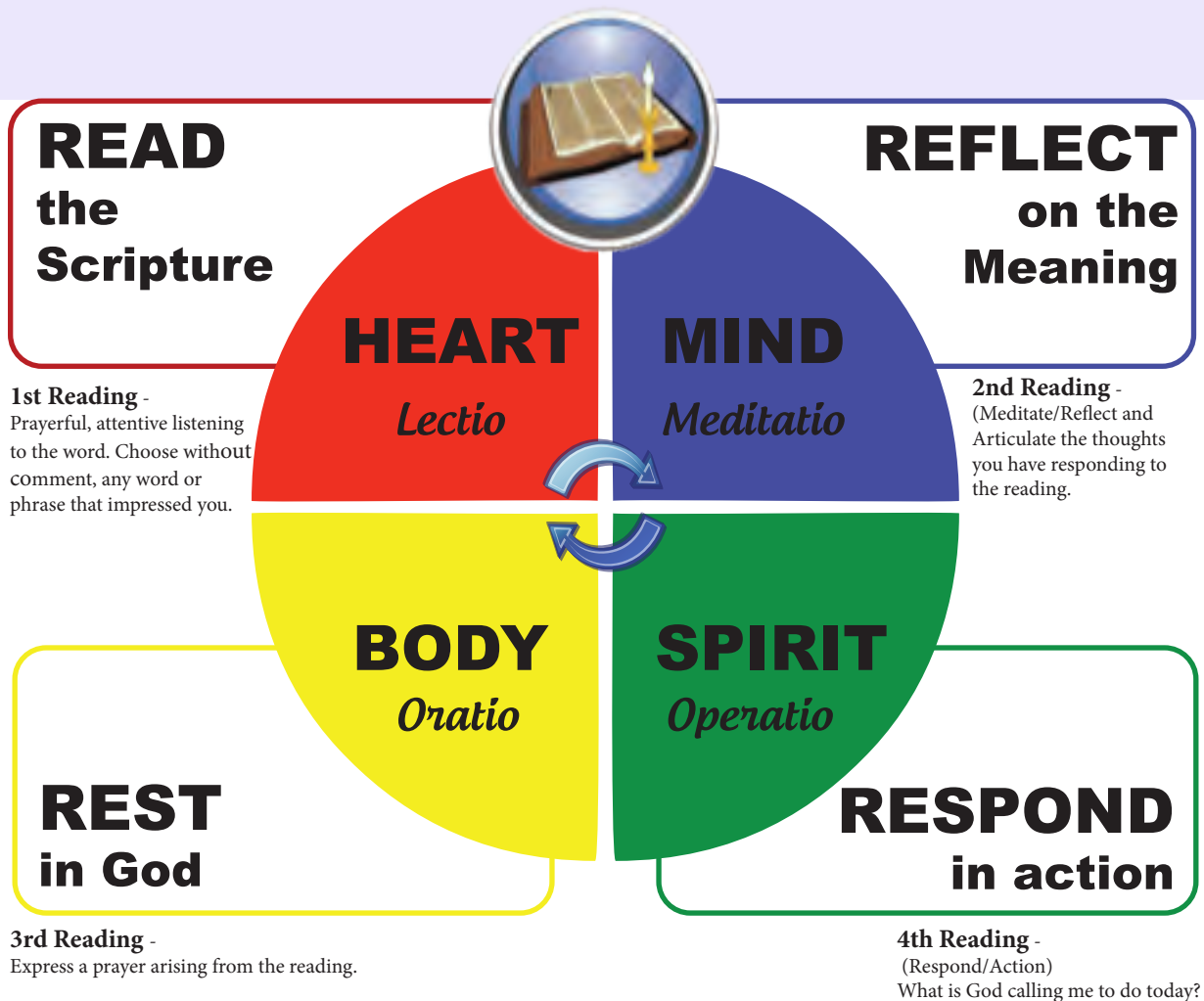
ASH WEDNESDAY, FEB 17

Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples: "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

"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."





WHAT we call the beginning is often the end And to make an end
is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.

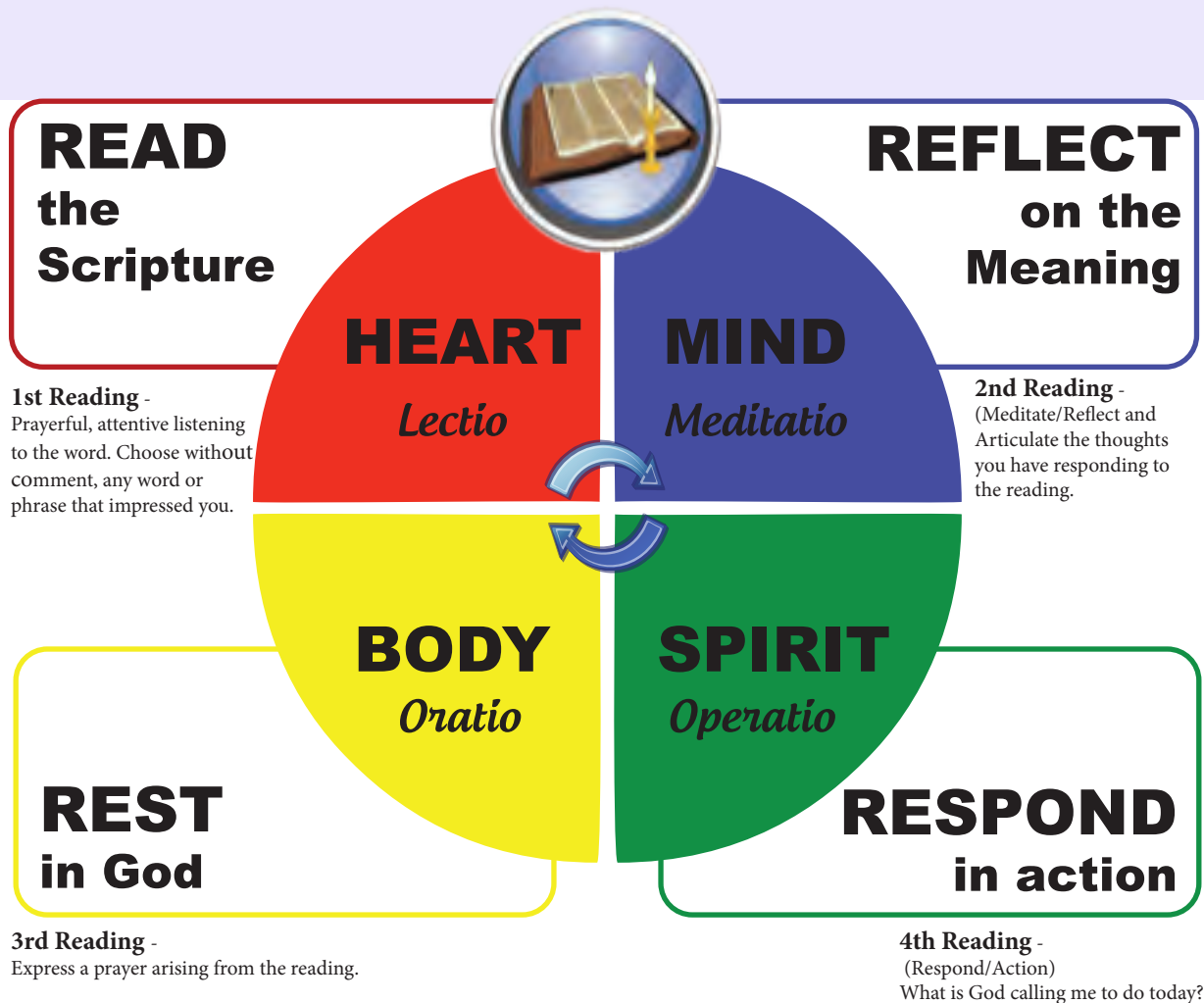
T. s. Eliot

THURSDAY, FEB 18

Lk 9:22-25

Jesus said to his disciples: "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised."

Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?"





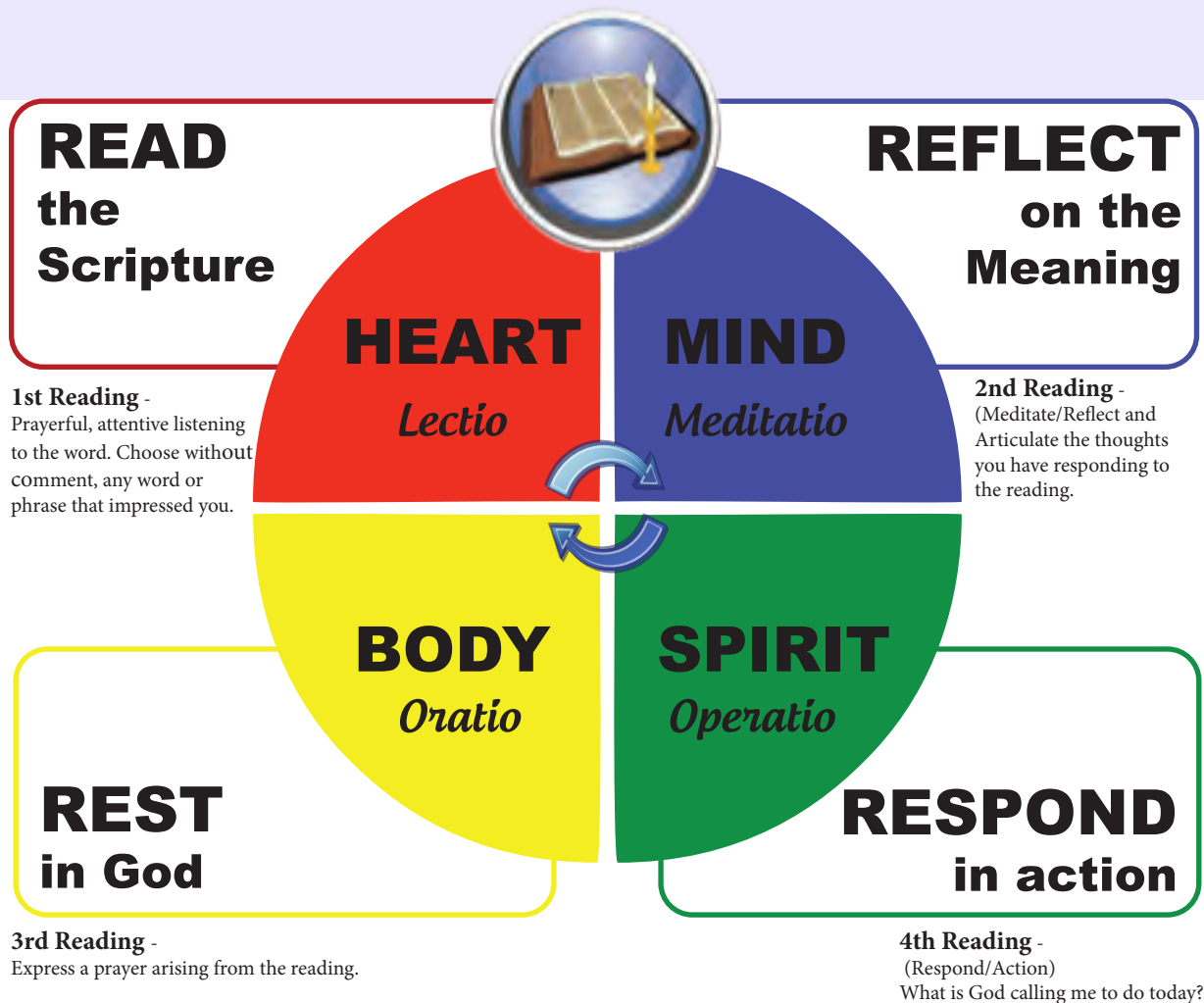
IN all you do, remember the end of your life,
and then you will never sin.

Sirach 7:36

FRIDAY, FEB 19

Mt 9:14-15

The disciples of John approached Jesus and said, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."





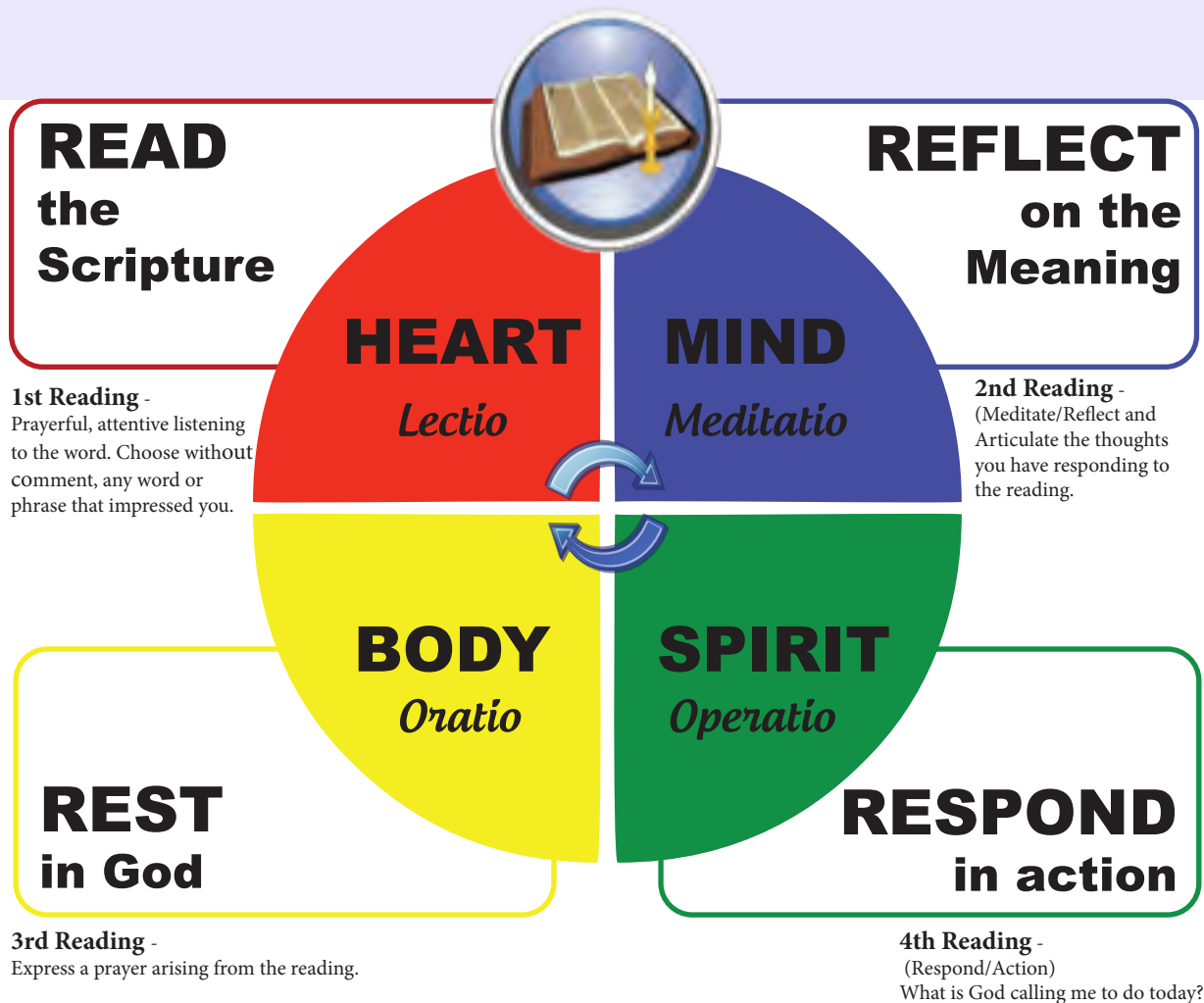
RETURN to me, says the LORD
of hosts, and I will return to you.

Zechariah 1 :3

SATURDAY, FEB 20

Lk 5:27-32

Jesus saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him. Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were at table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners."





THE cross, with which the ashes are traced upon us, is the sign of Christ's victory over death.

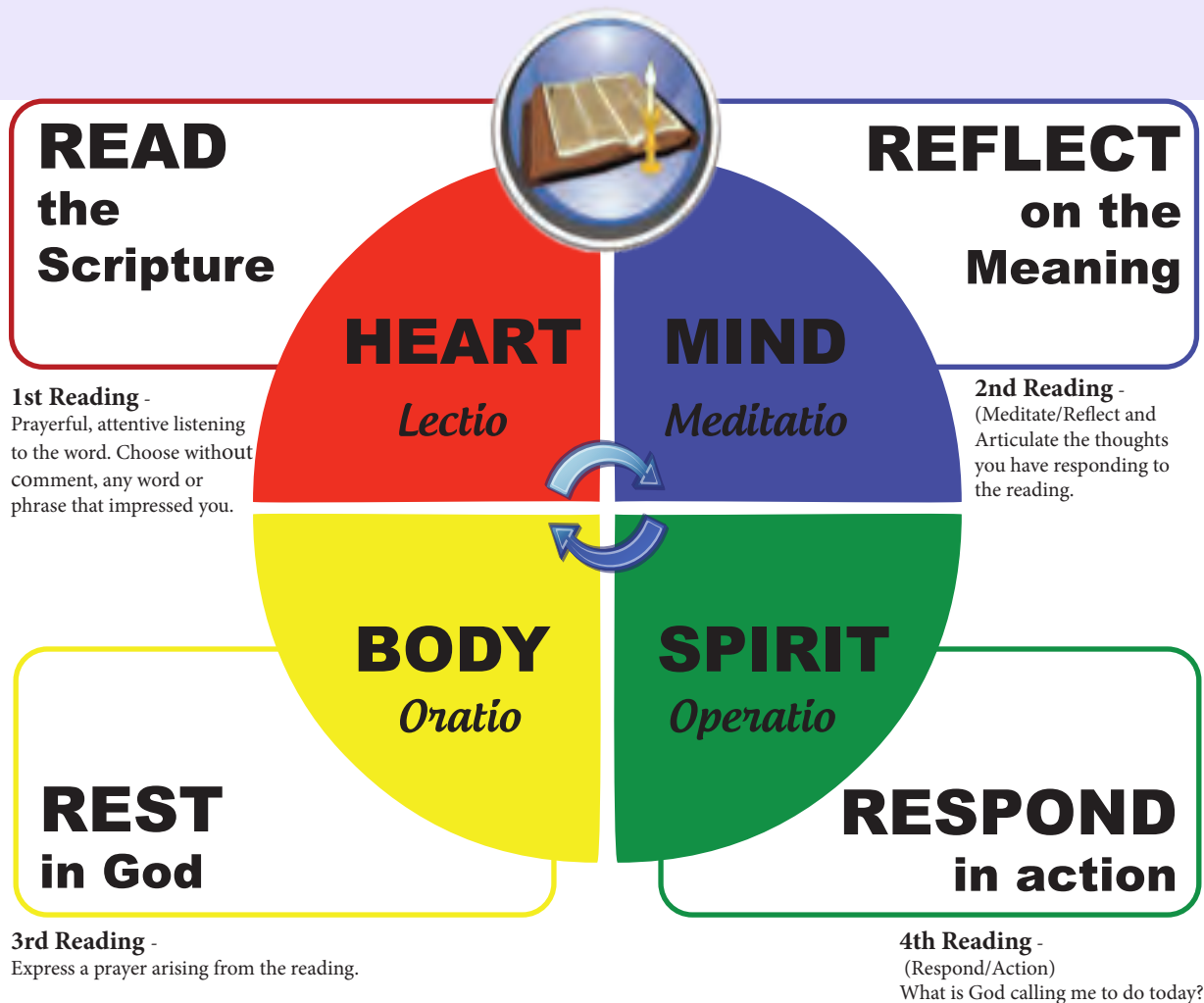
Thomas Merton

SUNDAY, FEB 21

Mk 1:12-15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."



FASTING is the soul of prayer, mercy is the lifeblood of fasting. If we have not all three together, we have nothing.

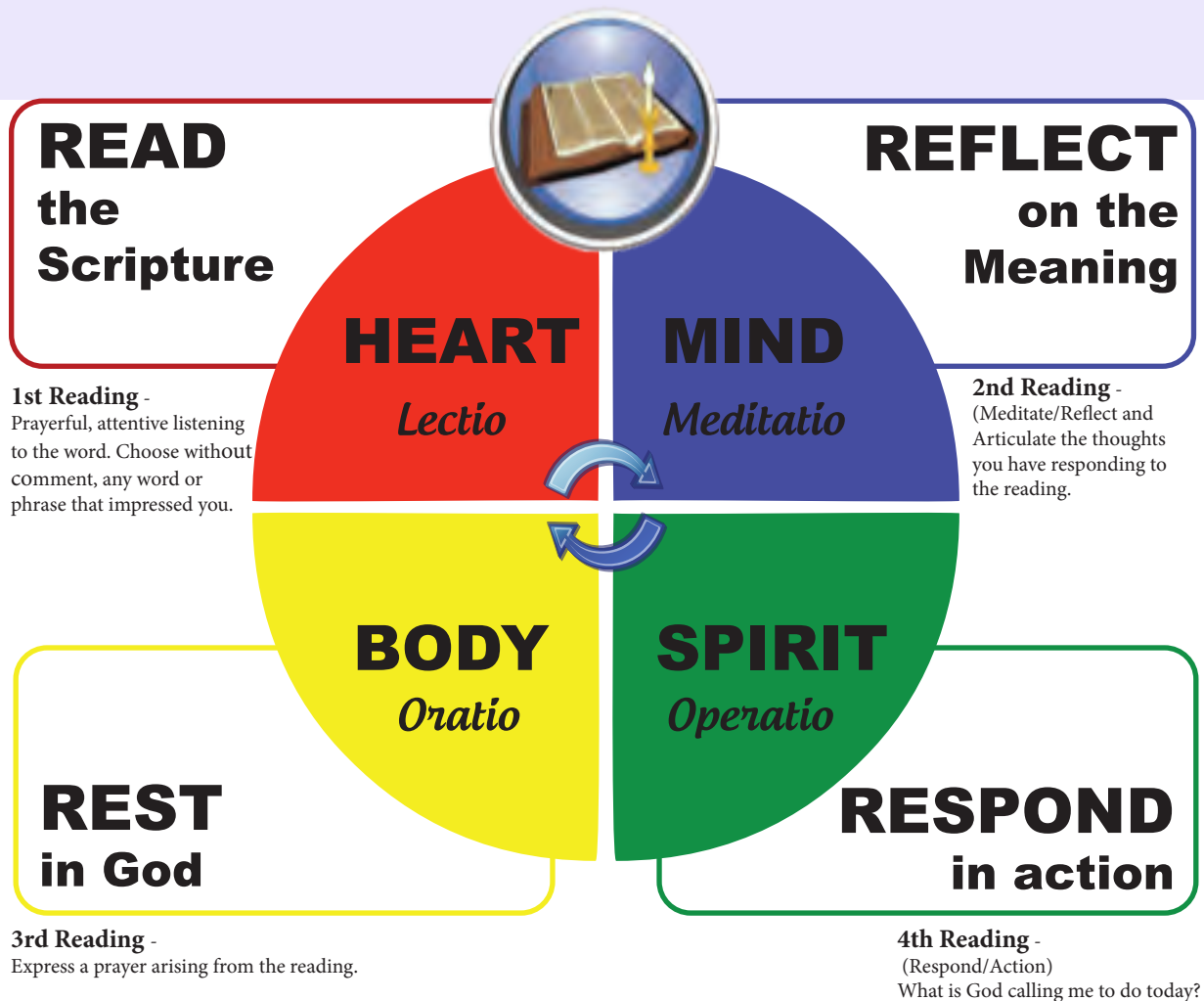
Peter Chrysologus



MONDAY, FEB 22

Mt 16:13-19

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."





MERCIFUL God,
you called us forth from the dust of the earth; you claimed us for Christ in the waters of baptism. Look upon us as we enter these Forty Days bearing the mark of ashes, and bless our journey through the desert of Lent to the font of rebirth.
May our fasting be hunger for justice;
our alms, a making of peace; our prayer, the chant of humble and grateful hearts.
All that we do and pray is in the name of Jesus,
for in his cross you proclaim your love for ever and ever.

Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers

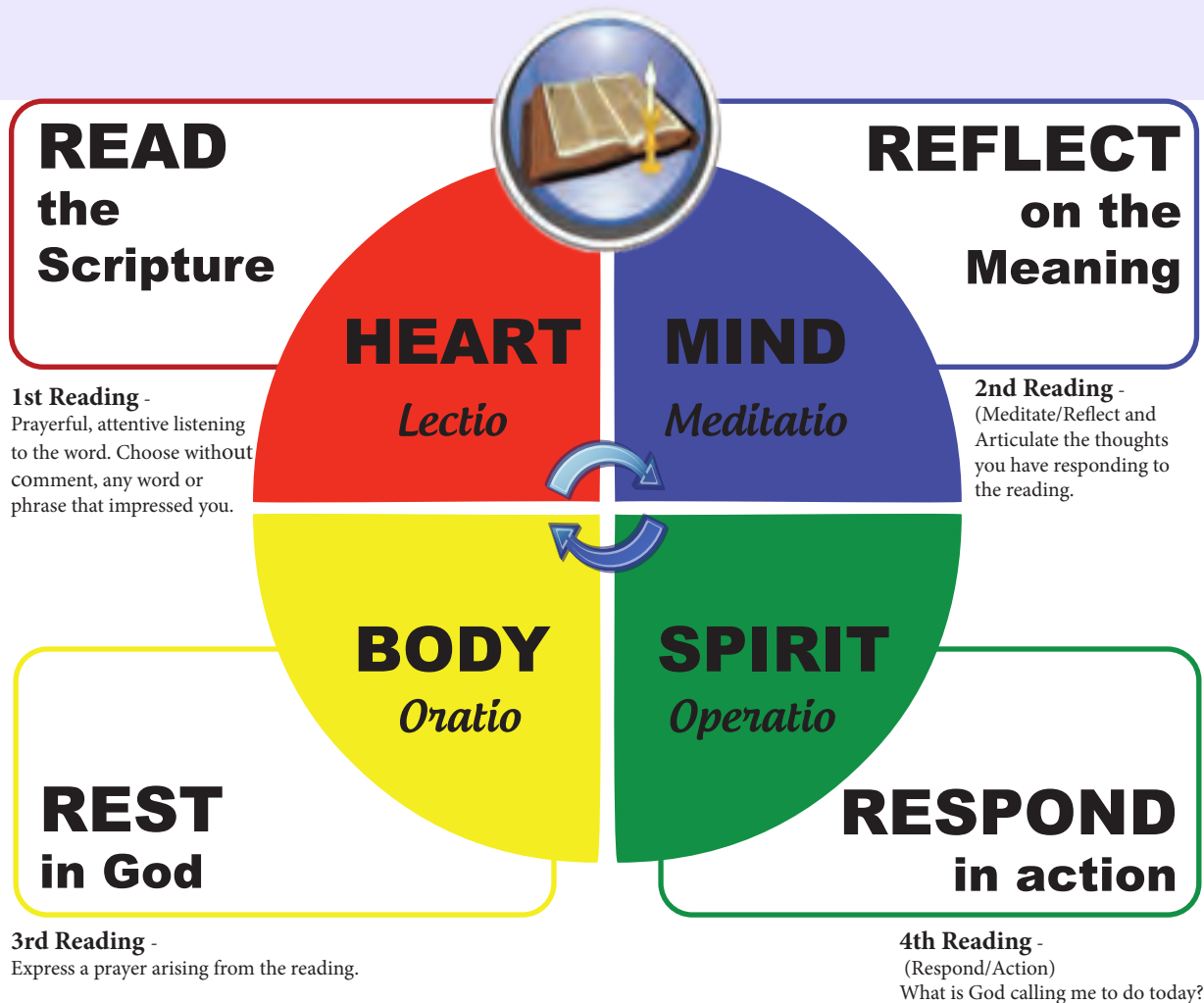
TUESDAY, FEB 23

Mt 6:7-15

Jesus said to his disciples: "In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

"This is how you are to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

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



GOD waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..

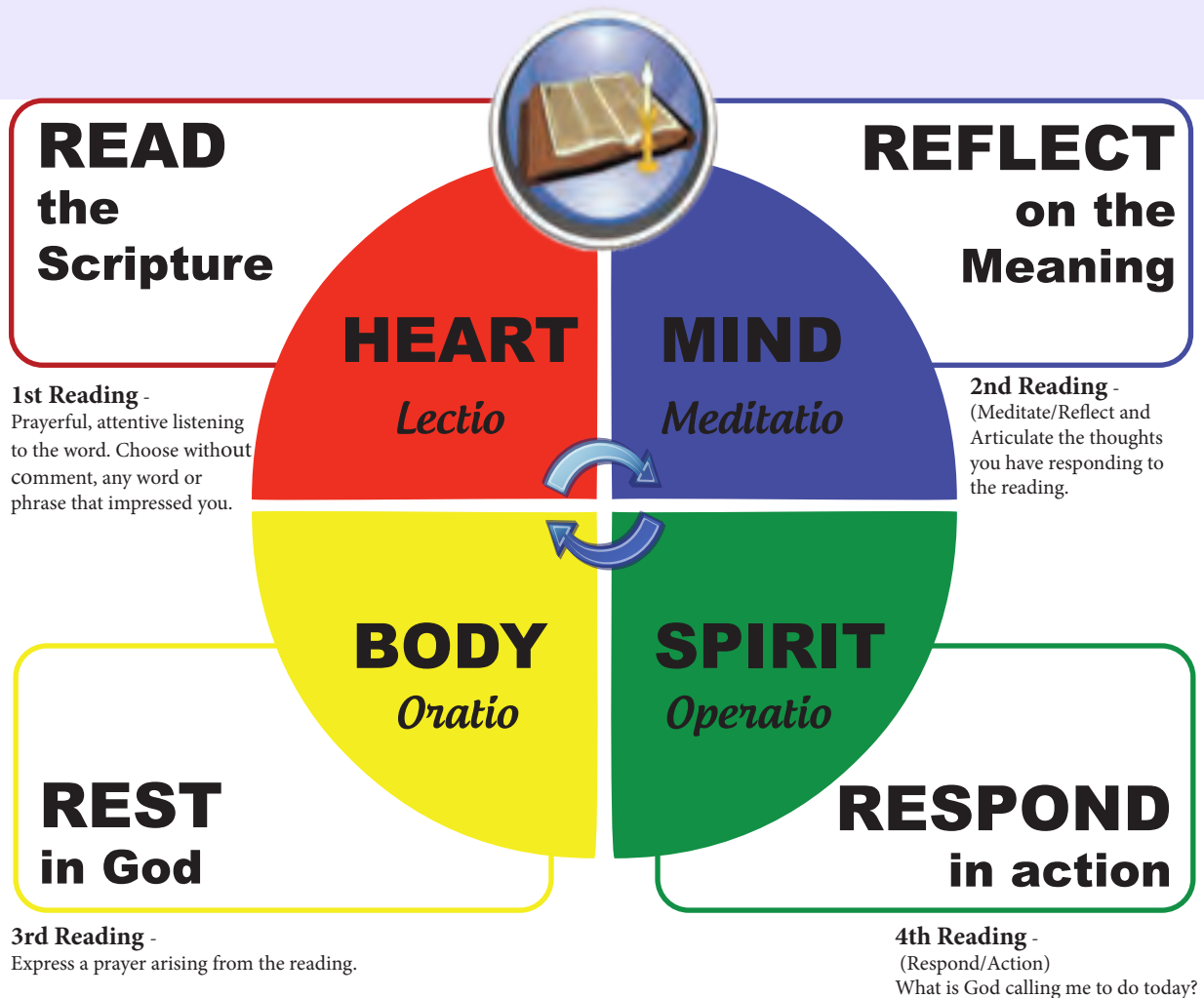
1Peter 3:20-27



WEDNESDAY, FEB 24

Lk 11:29-32

While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them, "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here."



LOOK with your loving care, we ask
you, Lord, on the fast we have begun.
May the discipline we keep with our
body be exercised with sincerity of
mind.

Missal of Pius V

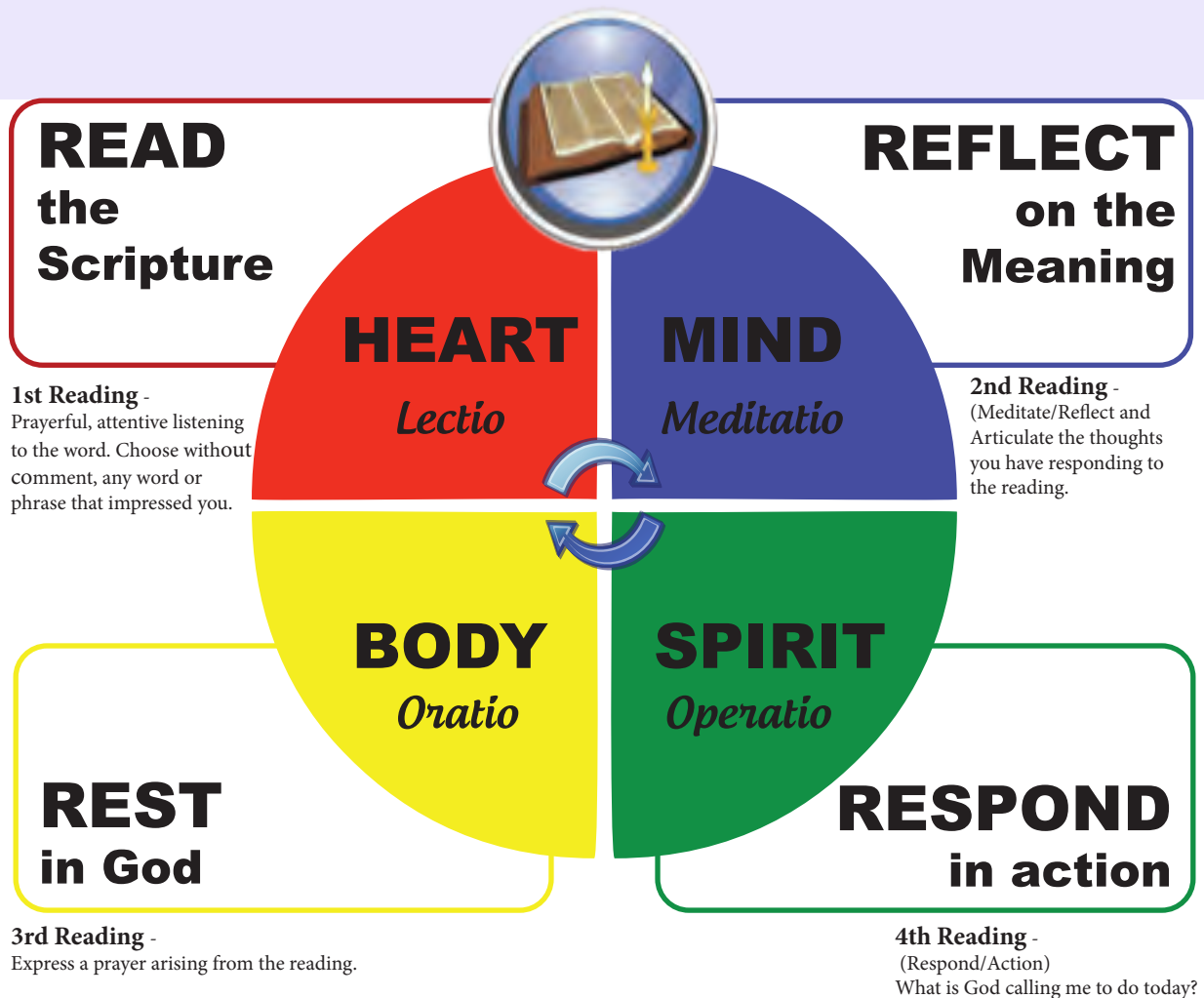


THURSDAY, FEB 25

Mt 7:7-12

Jesus said to his disciples: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asked for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asked for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him.

"Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets."



GRANT, O Lord, to thy faithful people that they may begin the venerable solemnities of fasting with becoming piety and may persevere to the end with steadfast devotion.

Missal of Pius V

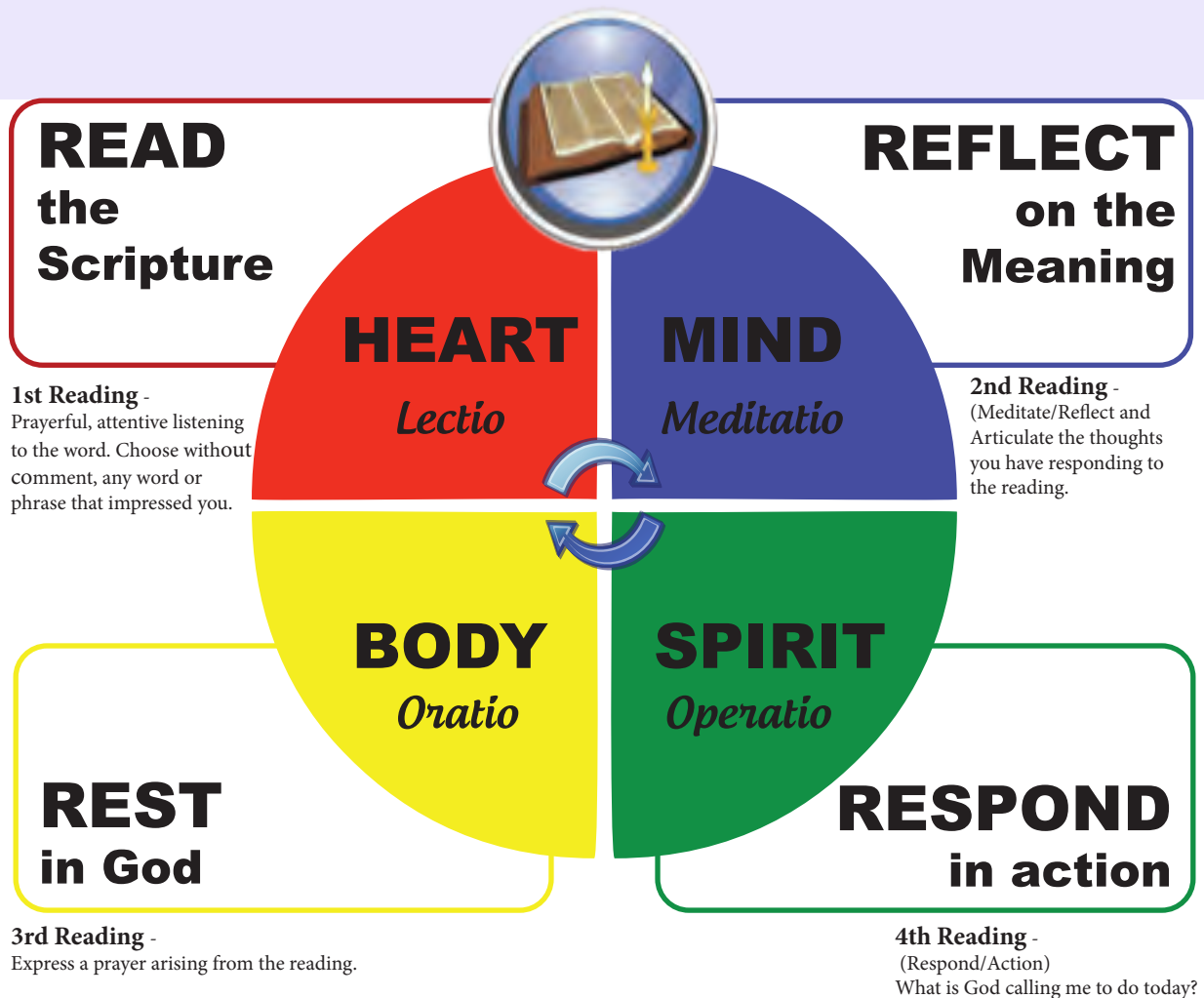


FRIDAY, FEB 26

Mt 5:20-26

Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, *You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.* But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, *Raqa*, will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny."





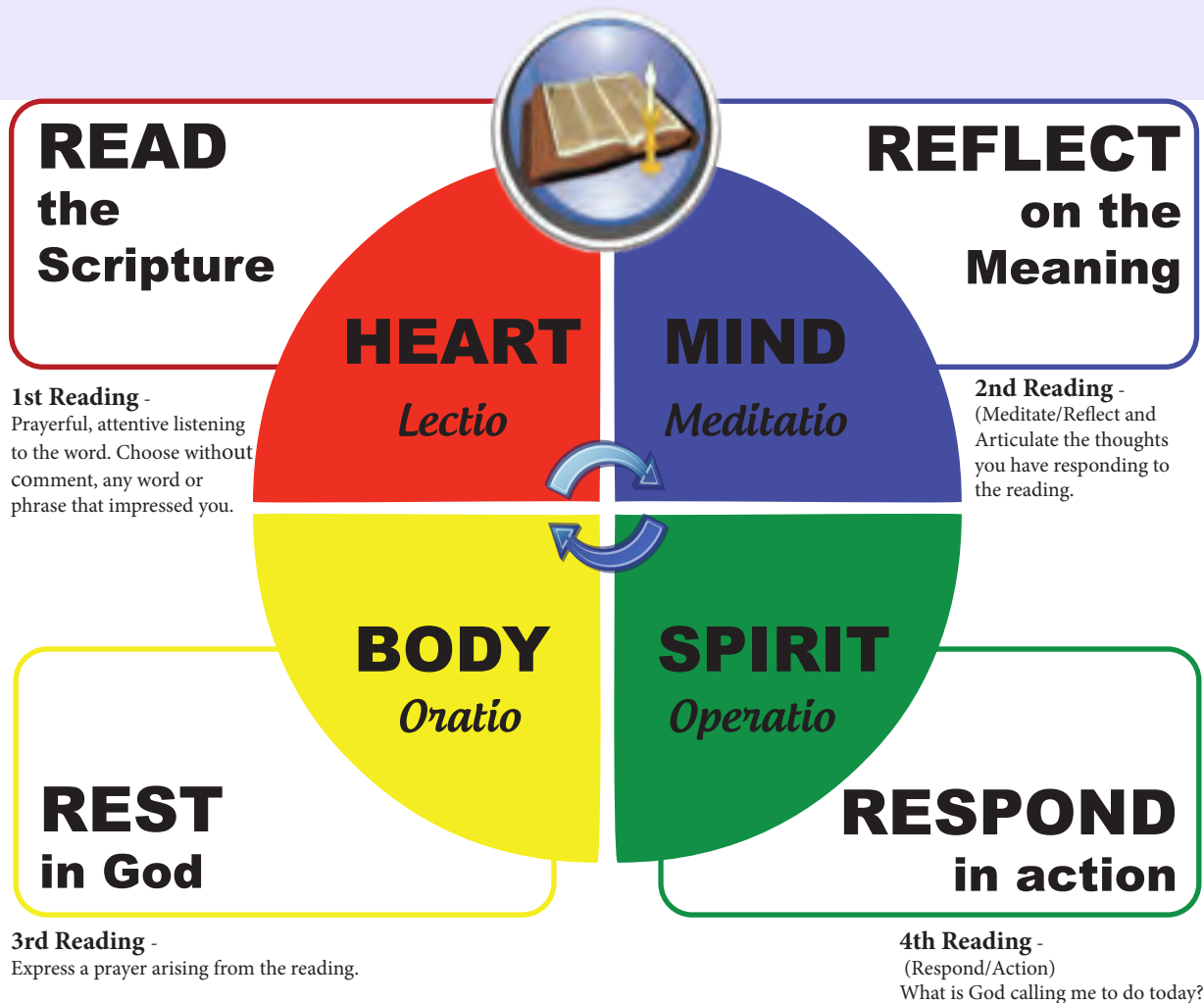
O God, you know how fragile is our
human nature,
wounded as it is by sin.
Help your people to enter upon the lenten journey
strengthened by the power of your word,
so that we may be victorious over the
seductions of the Evil One
and reach the paschal feast in the joy
of the Holy Spirit

Italian Sacramentary

SATURDAY, FEB 27

Mt 5:43-48

Jesus said to his disciples: "You have heard that it was said, *You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy*. But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers and sisters only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."





As some may be surprised to learn, Ash Wednesday is not the beginning of Lent, but only the beginning of the lenten fast. The liturgical time of Lent begins on the following Sunday, and here the liturgy has a different character.

It is more ancient and therefore more objective.

The structure of the Sunday Mass is loftier and more noble in its splendidly simple architecture.

Nothing is said about how a sinner feels, and the question of any possible conflict between the mercy and justice of God is not raised. All is bathed in the same pure light, the light of the wilderness where the Lord fasts in solitude and is tempted by the devil.

The dramatic, medieval rites of Ash Wednesday may perhaps make a stronger and more immediate appeal to our feelings.

The Mass of the first Sunday however leads us deeper into the real mystery of Lent, uniting us more profoundly and more directly with the Christ who, praying and fasting in us, will purify us and offer us together with himself to the Father in the glory of his Easter victory.

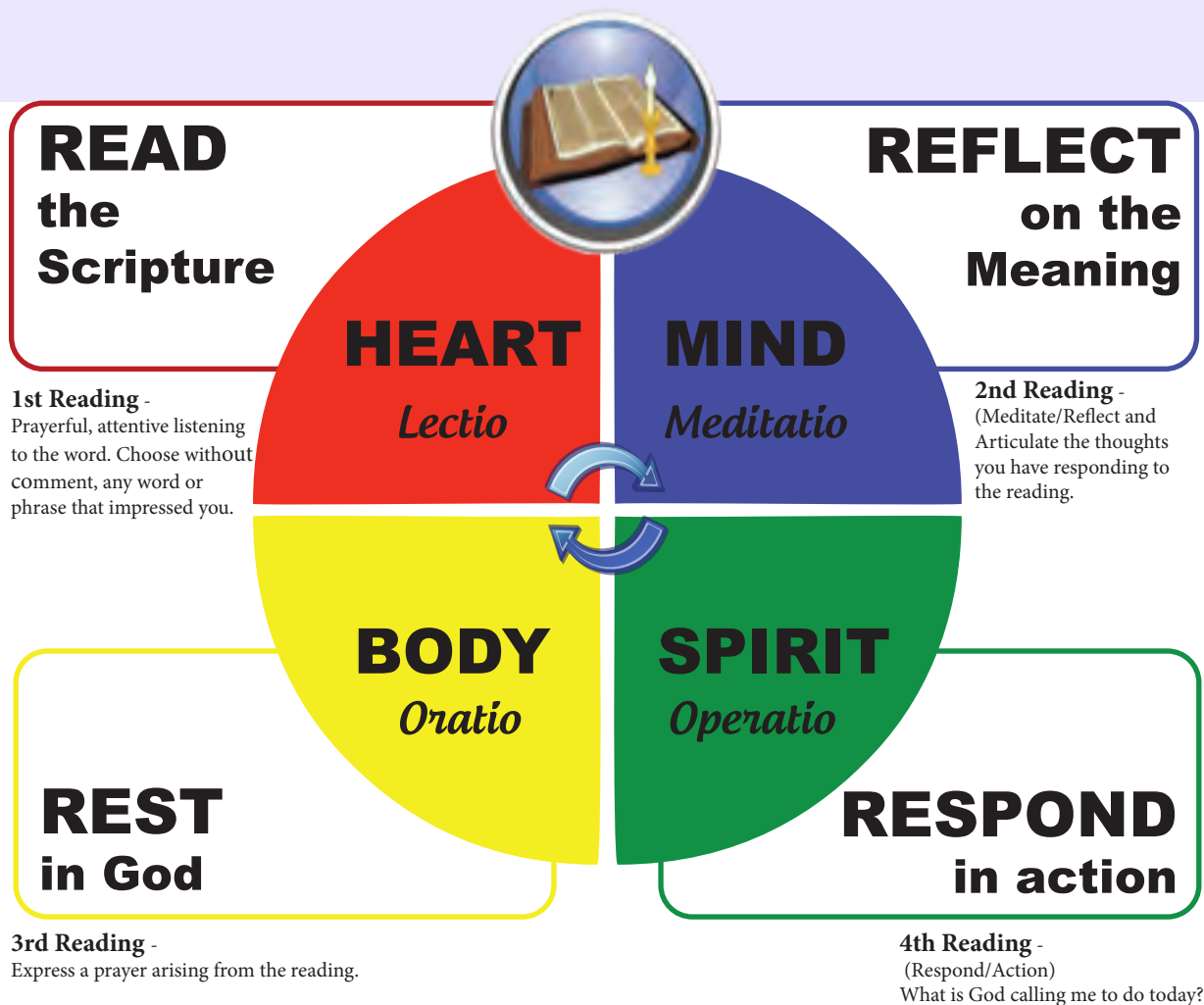
Thomas Merton

SUNDAY, FEB 28

Mk 9:2-10

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them.

As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.





ST. BONAVENTURE said that after the long fast of our Lord in the desert, when the angels came to minister to him, they went first to the Blessed Mother to see what she had on her stove, and got the soup she had prepared and transported it to our Lord, who relished it the more because his mother had prepared it. Of course.

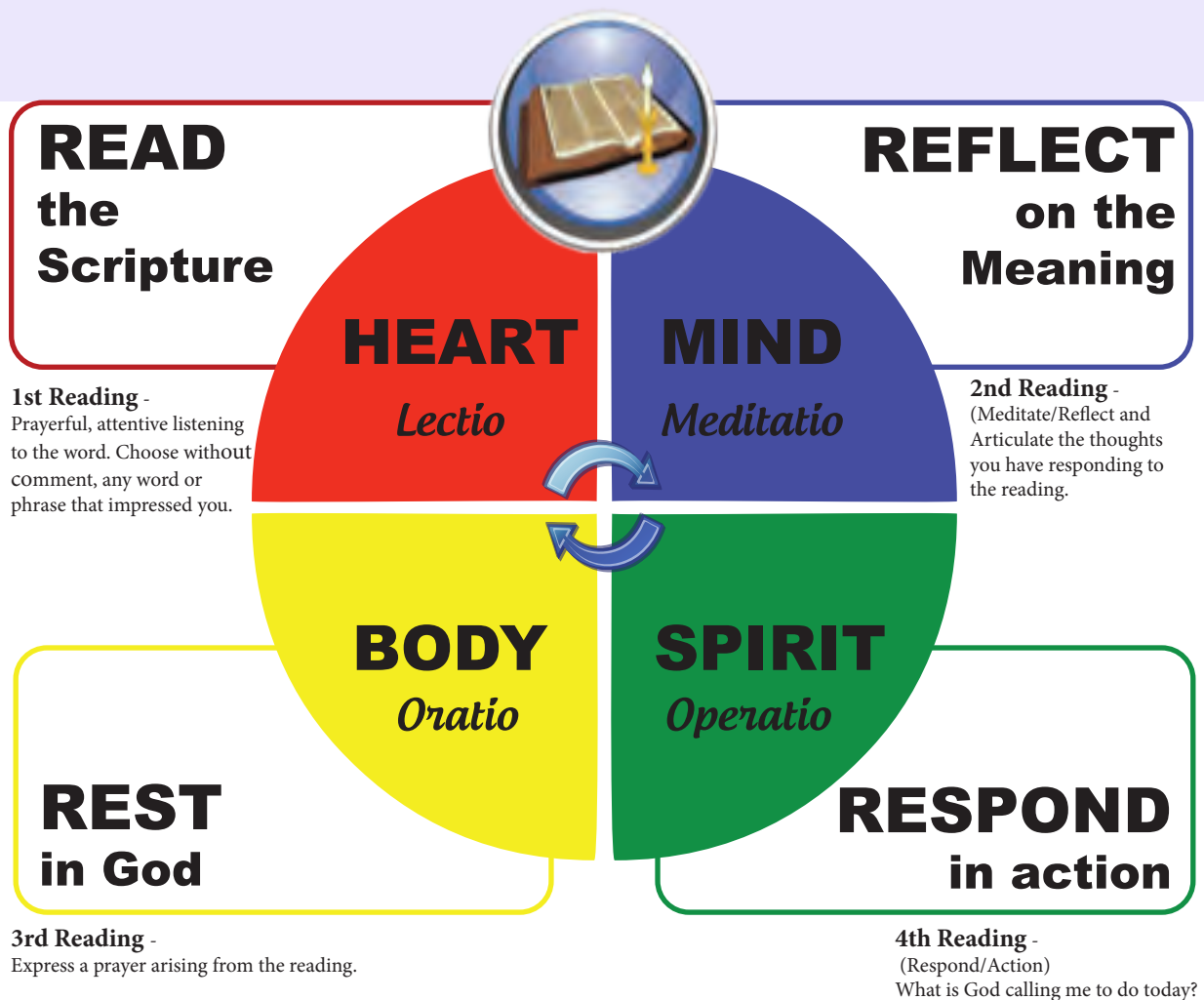
Dorothy Day

MONDAY, MAR 1

Lk 6:36-38

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

"Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you."



THE rains of the Deluge lasted forty days. In punishment for their disobedience, the Israelites had to wander through the desert for forty years. Moses had to fast forty days before he received the commandments from God. For forty days Goliath scoffed at the host of Israel's army before David rose up to challenge him. The prophet Elias had to fast forty days before God allowed him to set eyes on Mount Horeb. And the gospel for today recounts that Jesus, immediately after his baptism, was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit, and there fasted for forty days and forty nights.

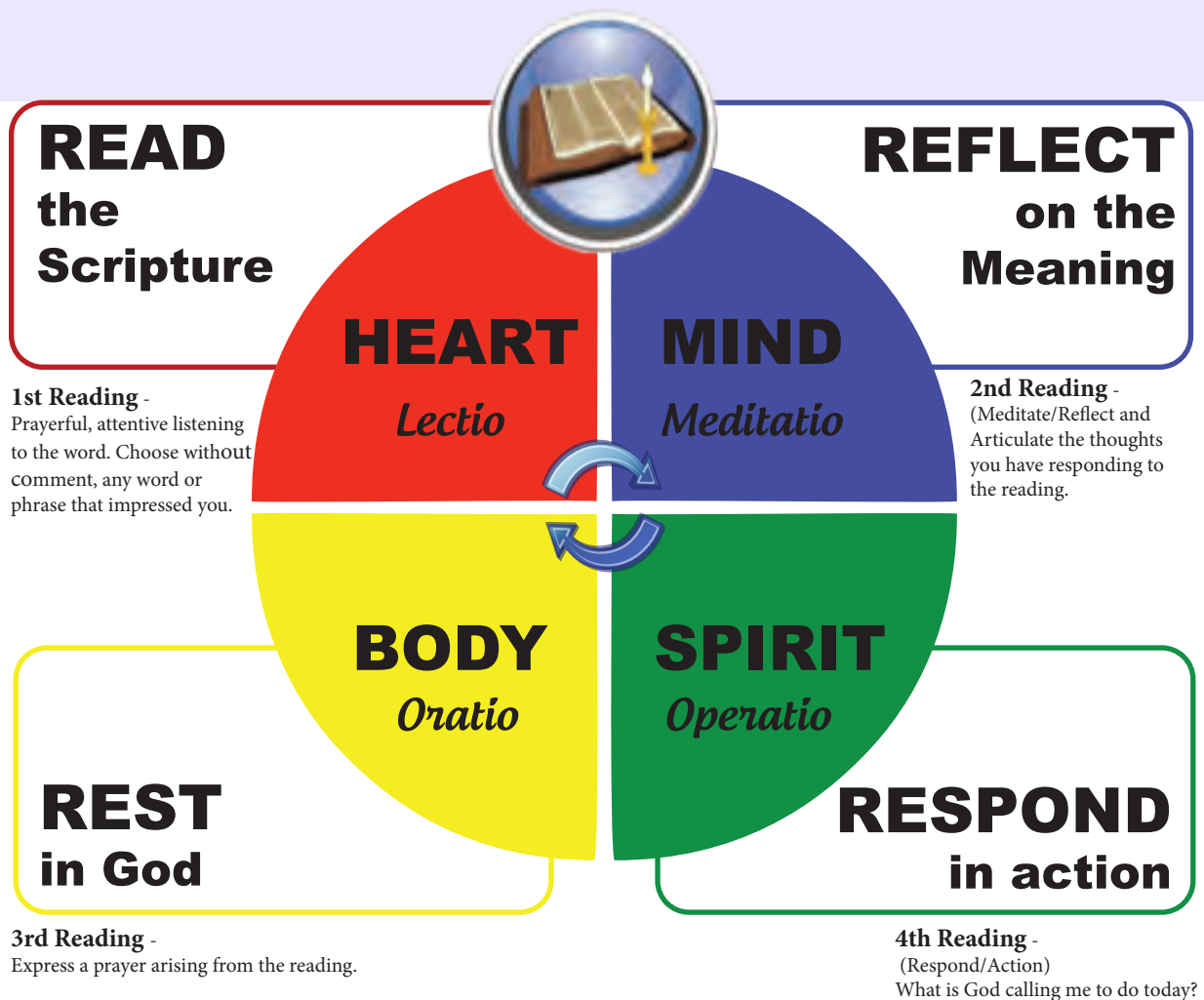
Pius Parsch



TUESDAY, MAR 2

Mt 23:1-12

Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation ‘Rabbi.’ As for you, do not be called ‘Rabbi.’ You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”





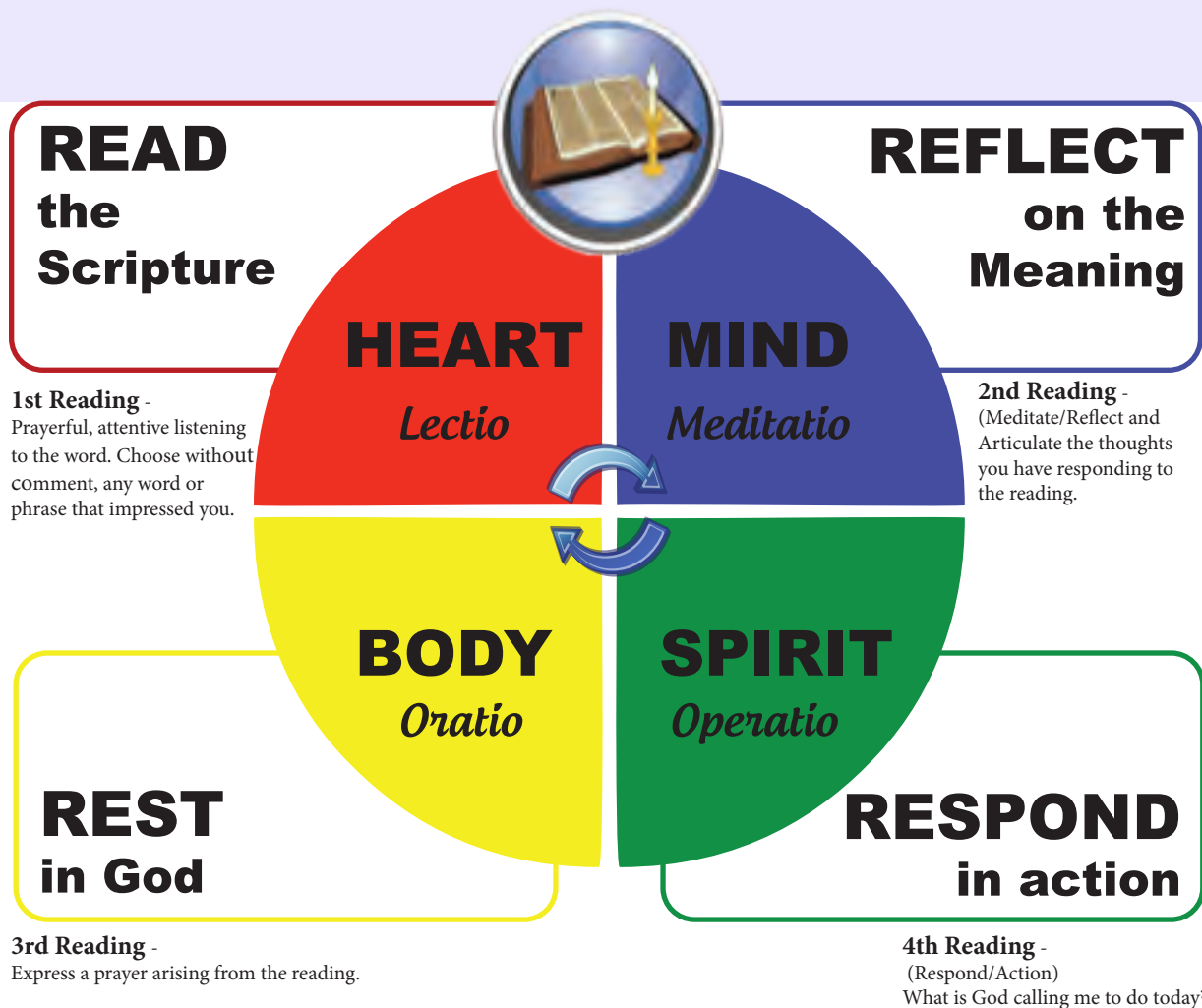
WHETHER we gaze with longing into the garden or with fear and trembling into the desert, of this we can be sure-God walked there first! And when we who have sinned and despoiled the garden are challenged now to face the desert, we do not face it alone; Jesus has gone there before us to struggle with every demon that has ever plagued a human heart. Face the desert we must if we would reach the garden, but Jesus had gone there before us.

WEDNESDAY, MAR 3

Mt 20:17-28

As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the Twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached Jesus with her sons and did him homage, wishing to ask him for something. He said to her, "What do you wish?" She answered him, "Command that these two sons of mine sit, one at your right and the other at your left, in your kingdom." Jesus said in reply, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?" They said to him, "We can." He replied, "My chalice you will indeed drink, but to sit at my right and at my left, this is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard this, they became indignant at the two brothers. But Jesus summoned them and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."



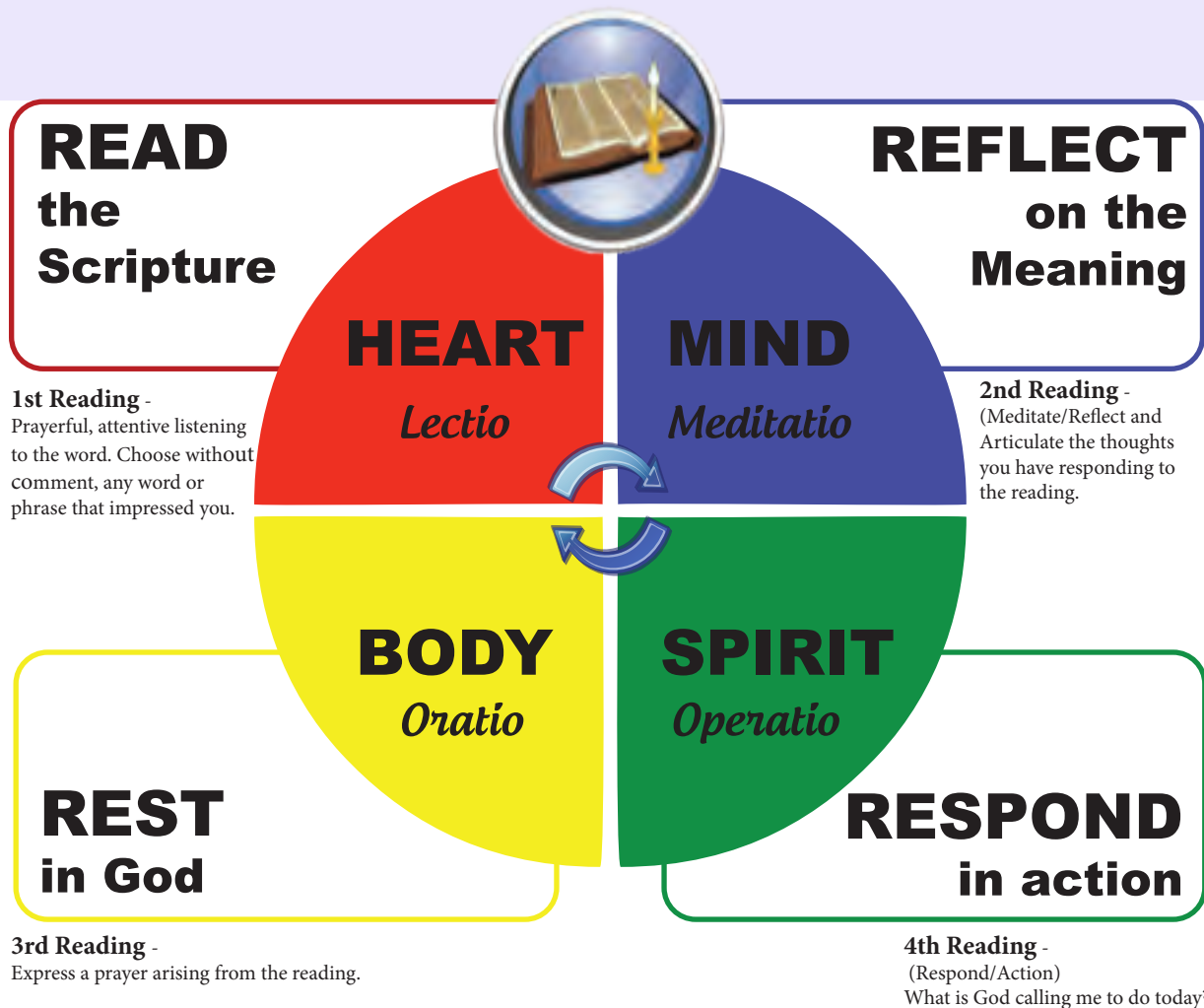


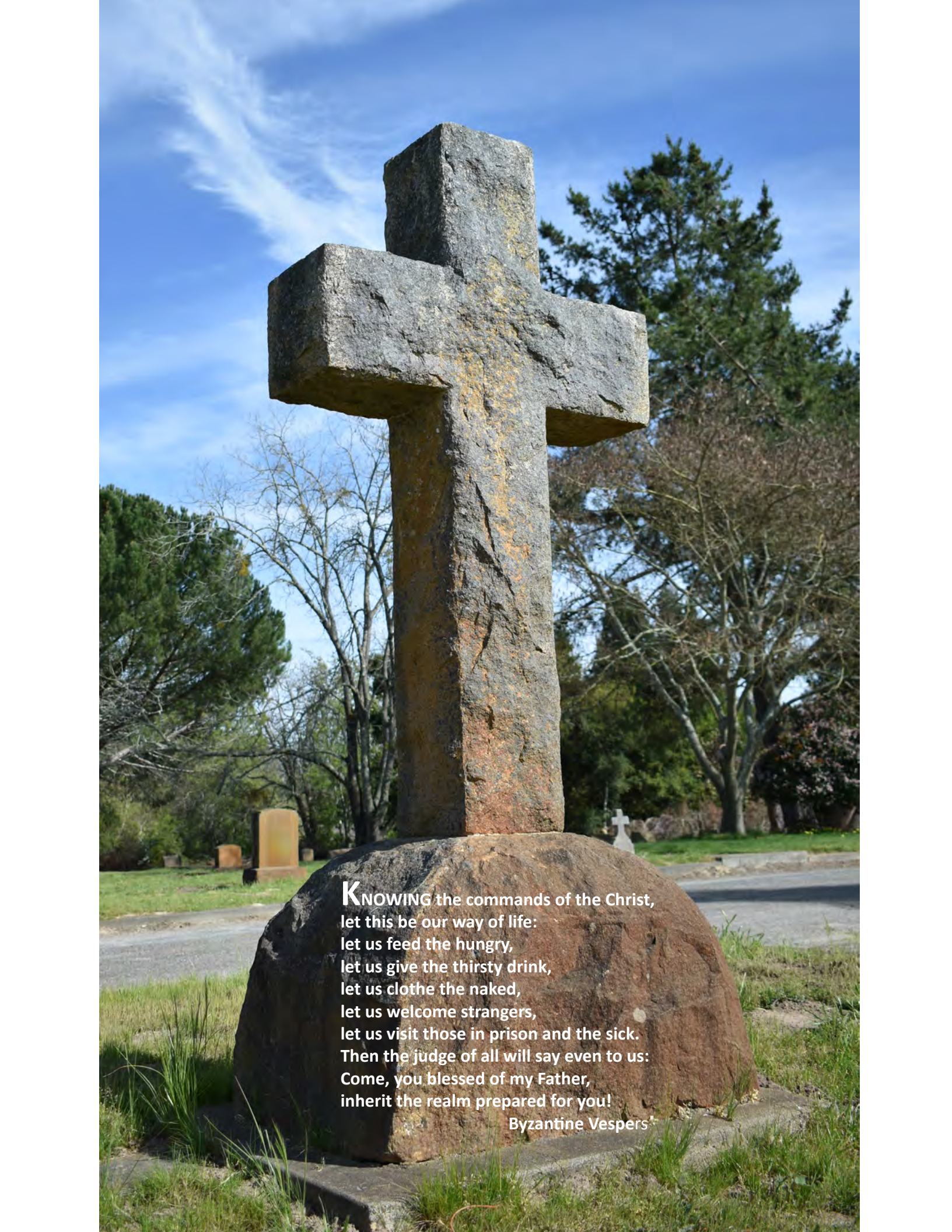
The merit of a fast day is in the charity dispensed then.
The Talmud

THURSDAY, MAR 4

Lk 16:19-31

Jesus said to the Pharisees: "There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.' He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'"





KNOWING the commands of the Christ,
let this be our way of life:
let us feed the hungry,
let us give the thirsty drink,
let us clothe the naked,
let us welcome strangers,
let us visit those in prison and the sick.
Then the judge of all will say even to us:
Come, you blessed of my Father,
inherit the realm prepared for you!

Byzantine Vespers¹

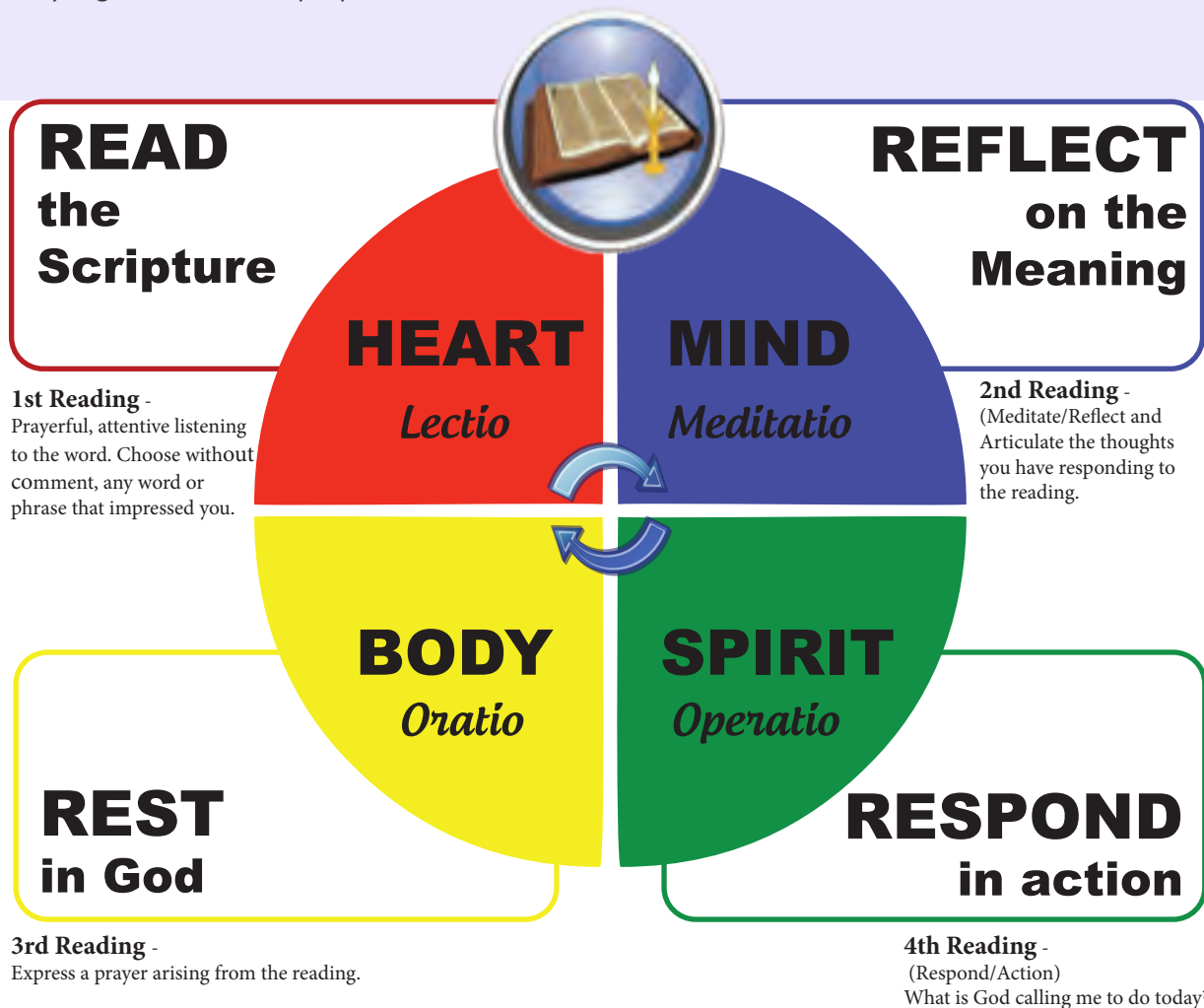
FRIDAY, MAR 5

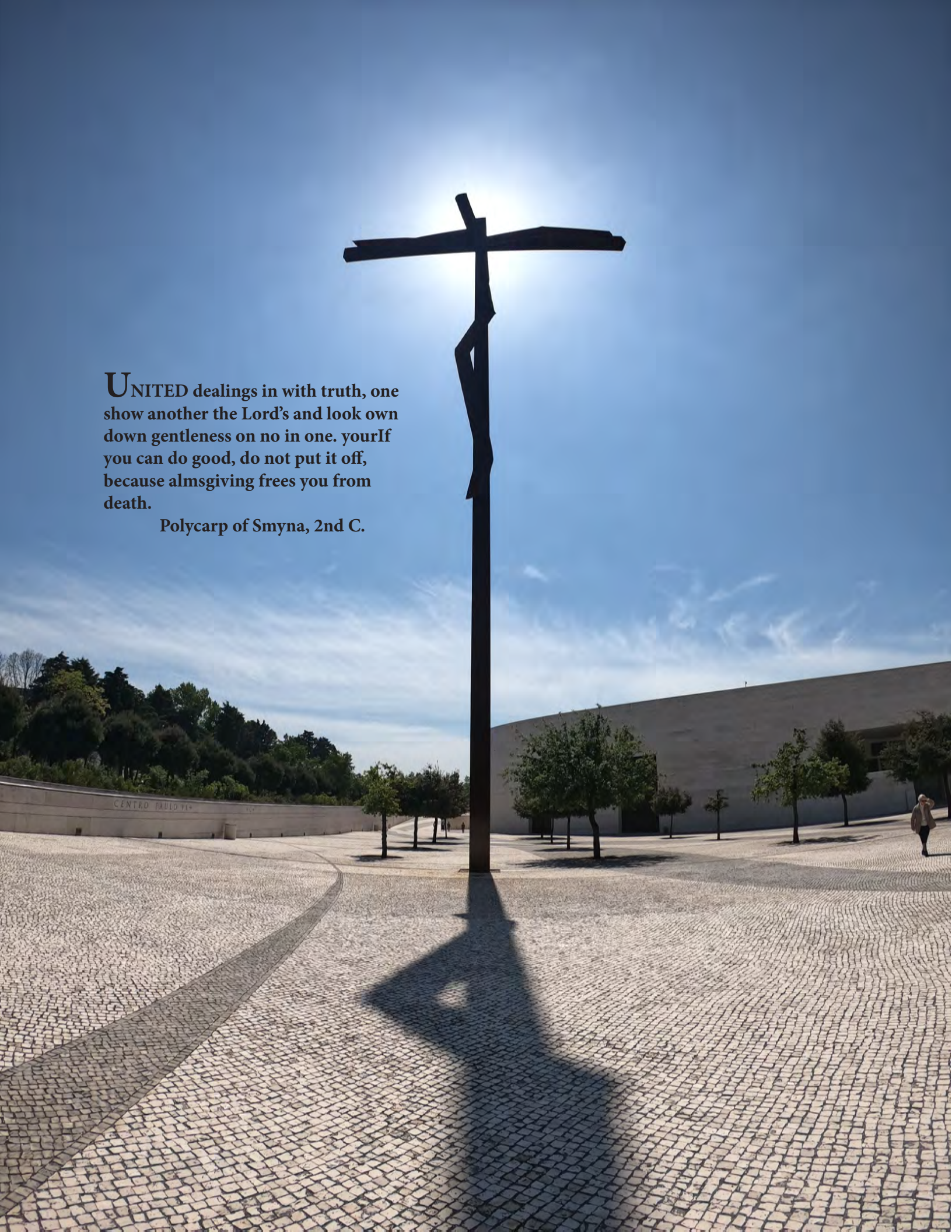
Mt 21:33-43, 45-46

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: "Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?" They answered him, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures:

*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;
by the Lord has this been done,
and it is wonderful in our eyes?*

Therefore, I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that he was speaking about them. And although they were attempting to arrest him, they feared the crowds, for they regarded him as a prophet.





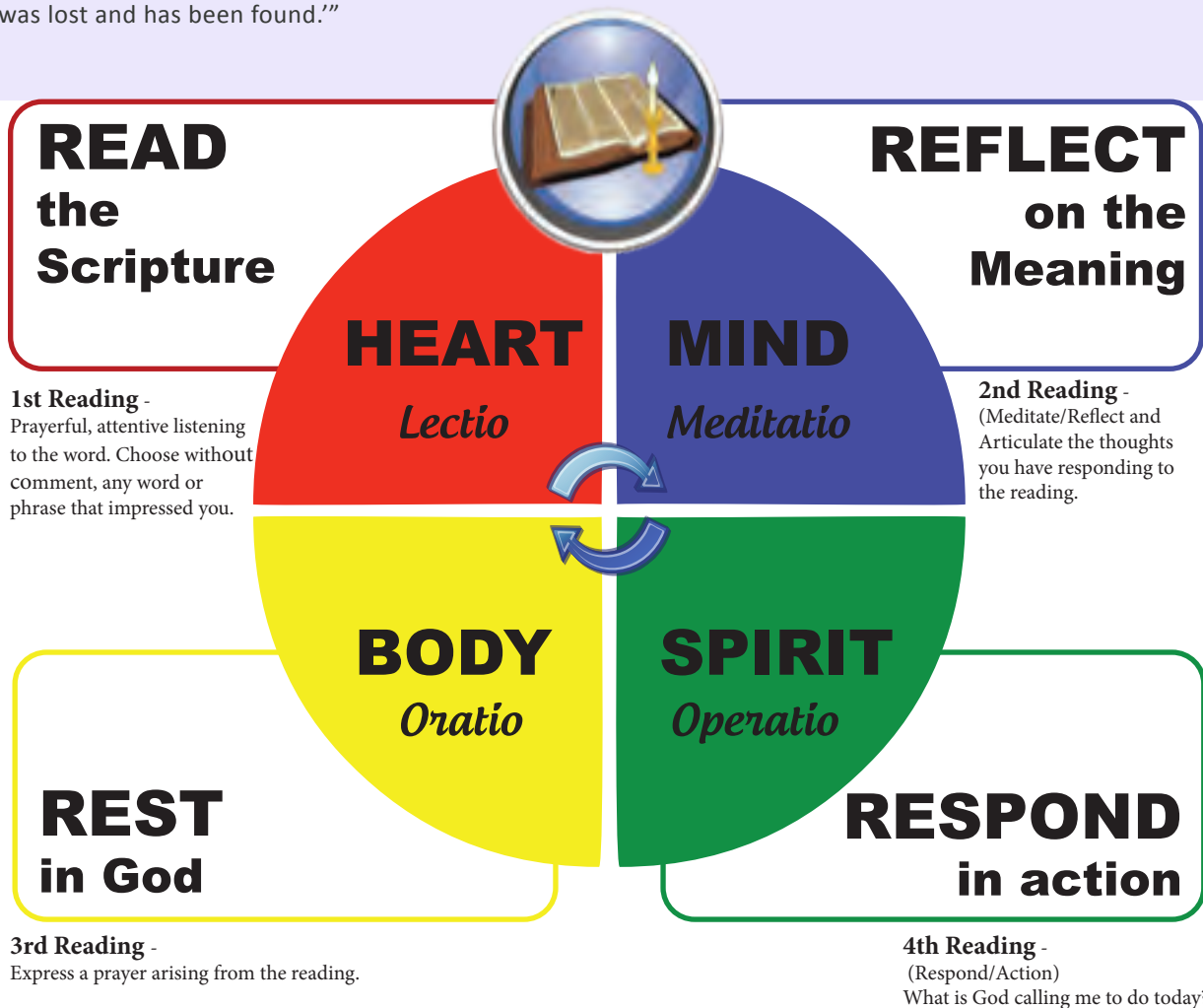
UNITED dealings in with truth, one
show another the Lord's and look own
down gentleness on no in one. yourIf
you can do good, do not put it off,
because almsgiving frees you from
death.

Polycarp of Smyrna, 2nd C.

SATURDAY, MAR 6

Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So to them Jesus addressed this parable. "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."' So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly, bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'"





JESUS met the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.
The One who covers the earth with clouds
asks water of her.
Oh, what a wonder!
The One who suspended the earth on the waters
asks for water!

Byzantine Vespers

SUNDAY, MAR 7

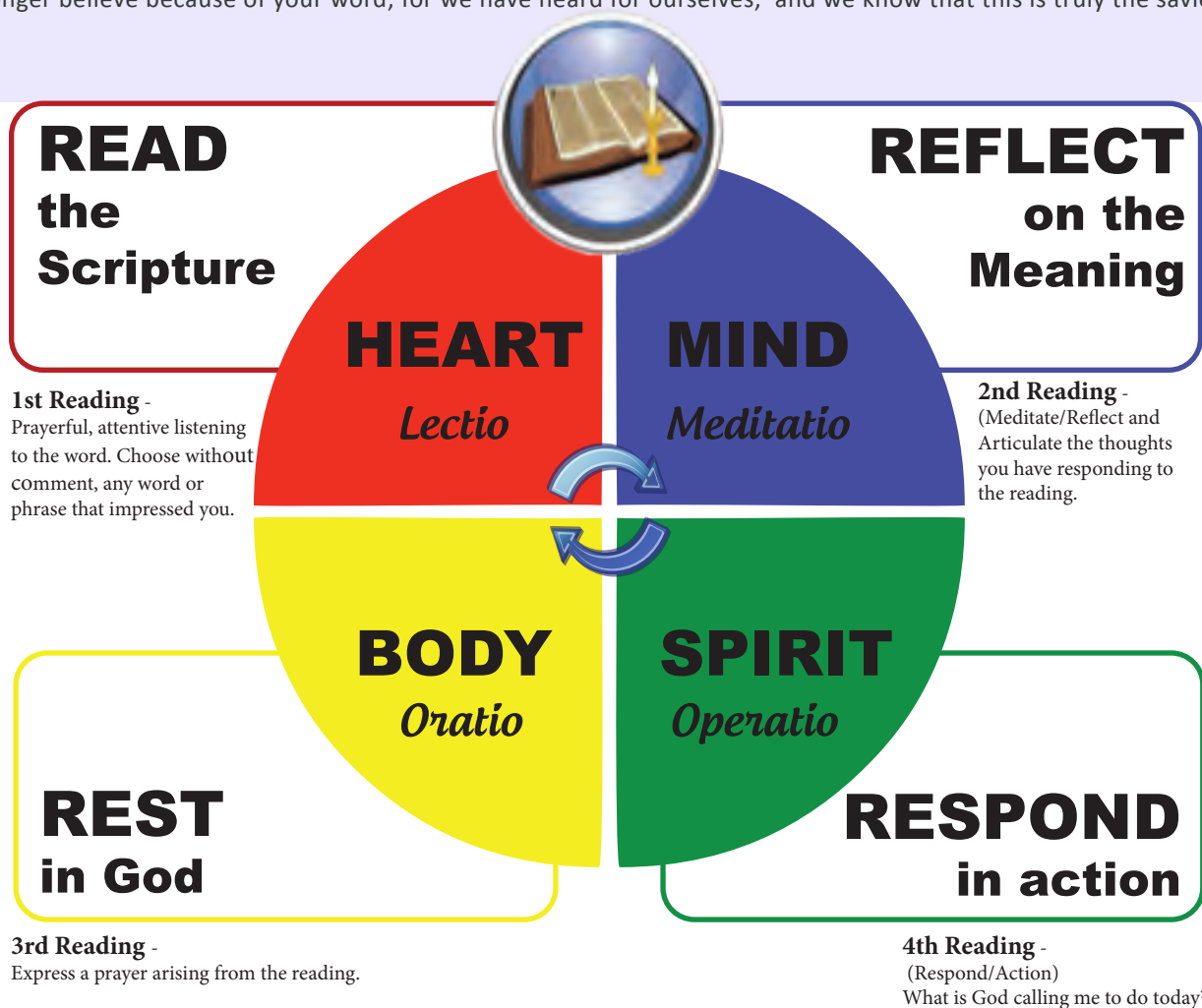
Jn 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42

Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon.

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.

"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." The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ; when he comes, he will tell us everything." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking with you."

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him. When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world."



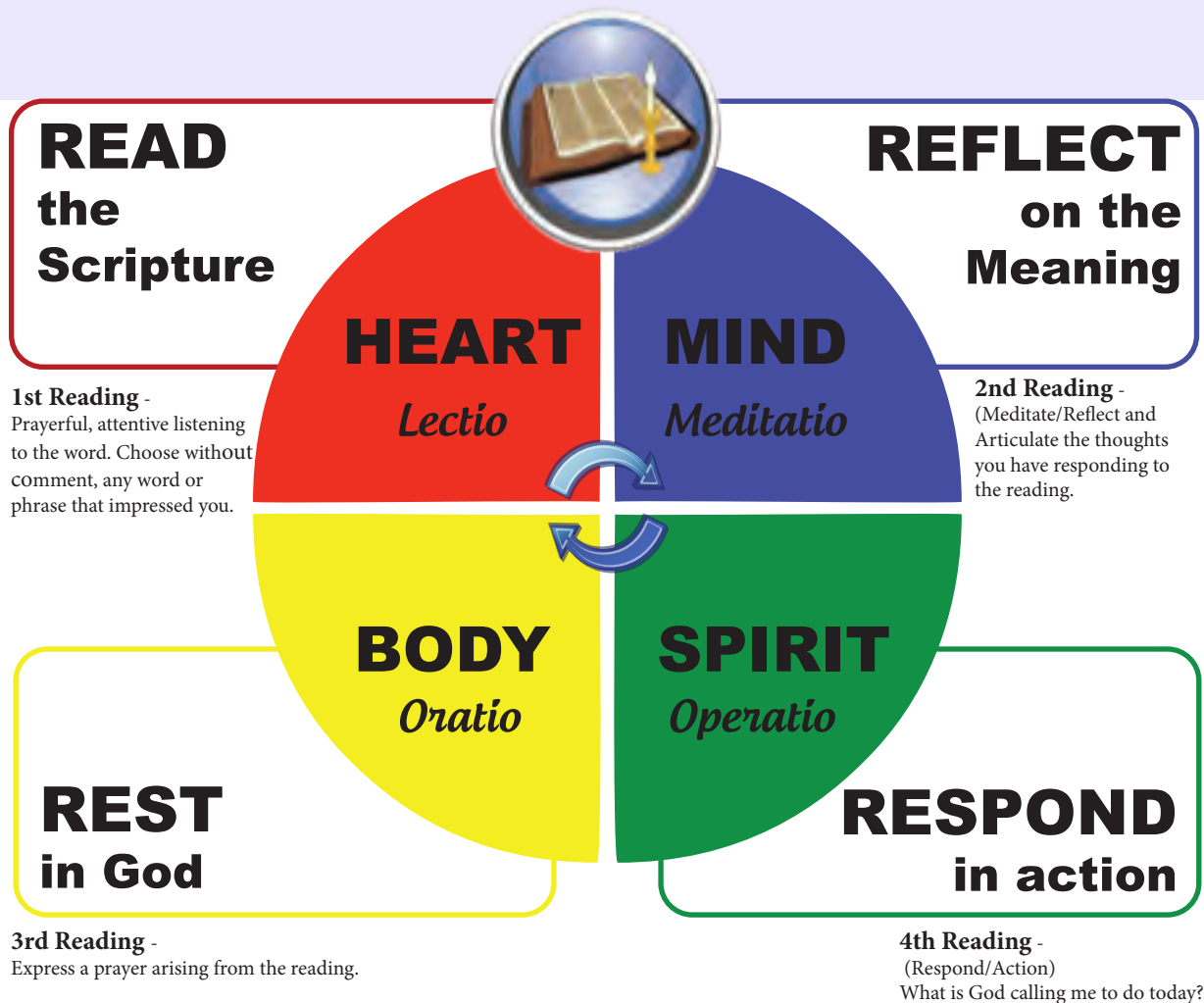


I am the vessel.
The draught is God's.
And God is the thirsty One.
Dag Hammarskjöld

MONDAY, MAR 8

Lk 4:24-30

Jesus said to the people in the synagogue at Nazareth: "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them and went away.





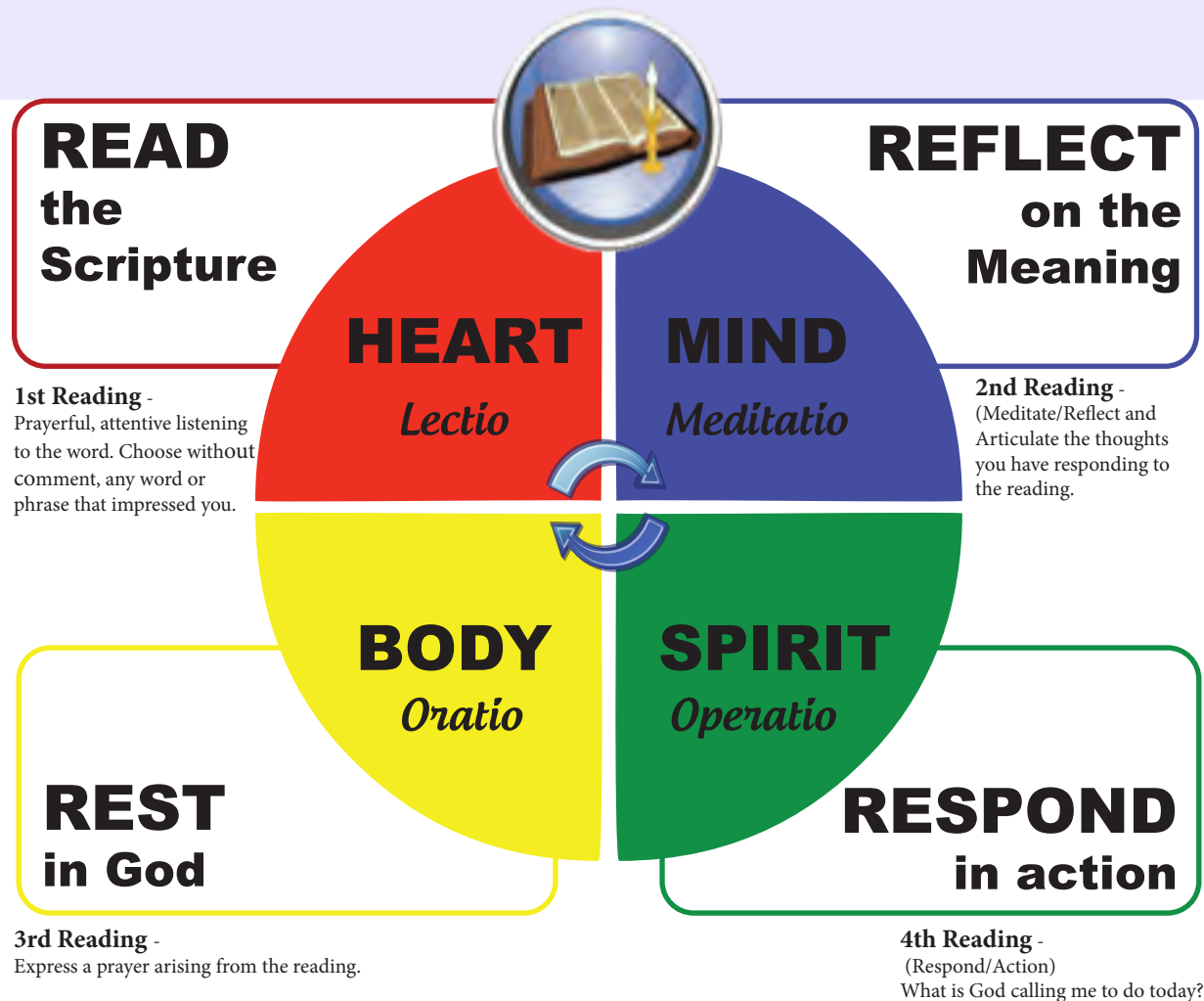
THERE is a really deep well inside me. And in it dwells God. Sometimes I am there too. But more often stones and grit block the well, and God is buried beneath. Then God must be dug out again.

Etty Hillesum

TUESDAY, MAR 9

Mt 18:21-35

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."





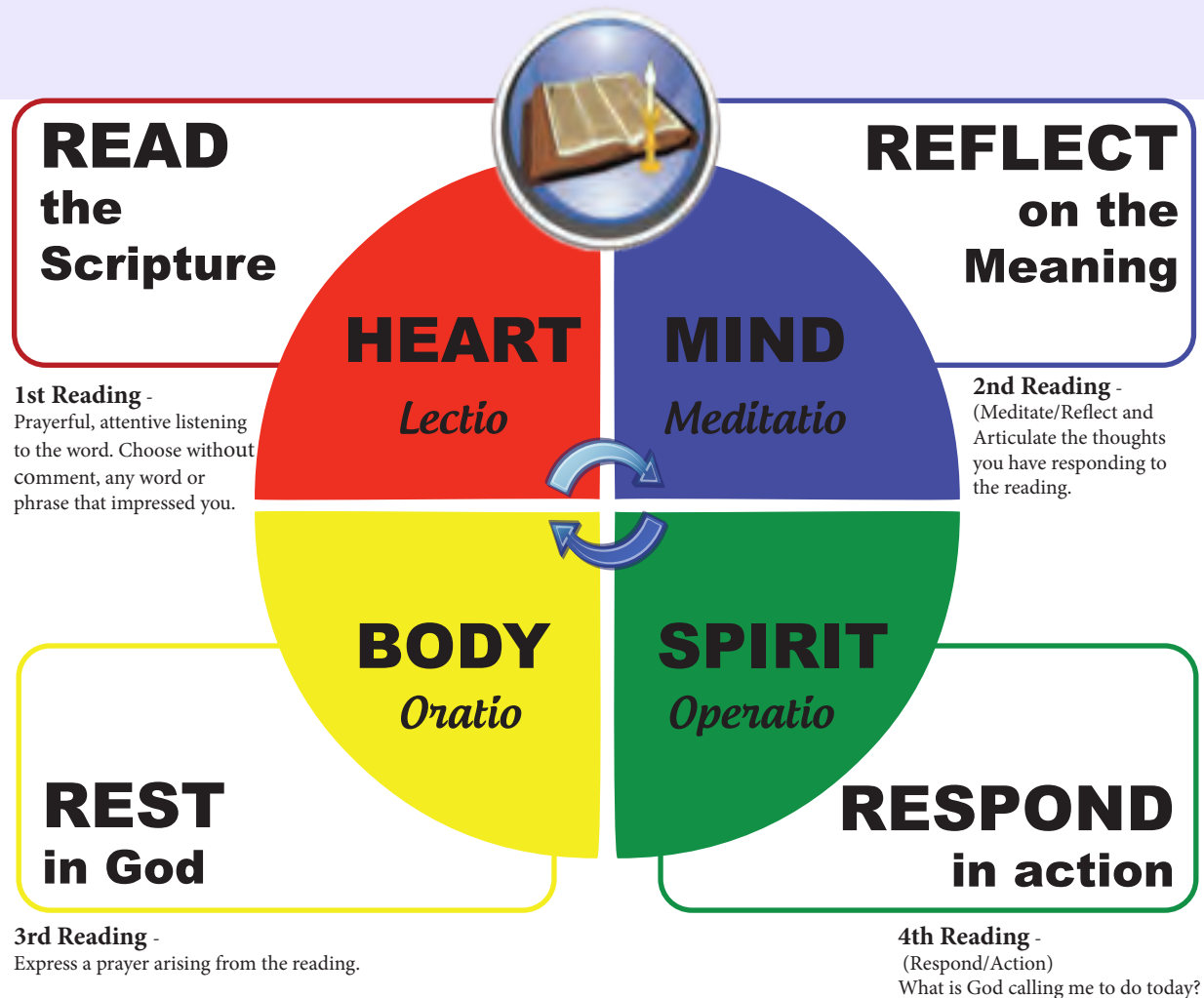
IN down-to-earth Hebrew, to meditate is to chew one's cud. The familiar cattle of Hebrew existence proved a helpful image for the devout believer "whose delight is the law of the Lord and who ponders God's law day and night" (Psalm 1). The browsing cow nibbles constantly at the lush pasture and when it has filled its stomach lies down, regurgitates what it has gathered and chews "meditatively" on its cud until the cud is fully assimilated.

William G. Storey

WEDNESDAY, MAR 10

Mt 5:17-19

Jesus said to his disciples: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the Kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.”





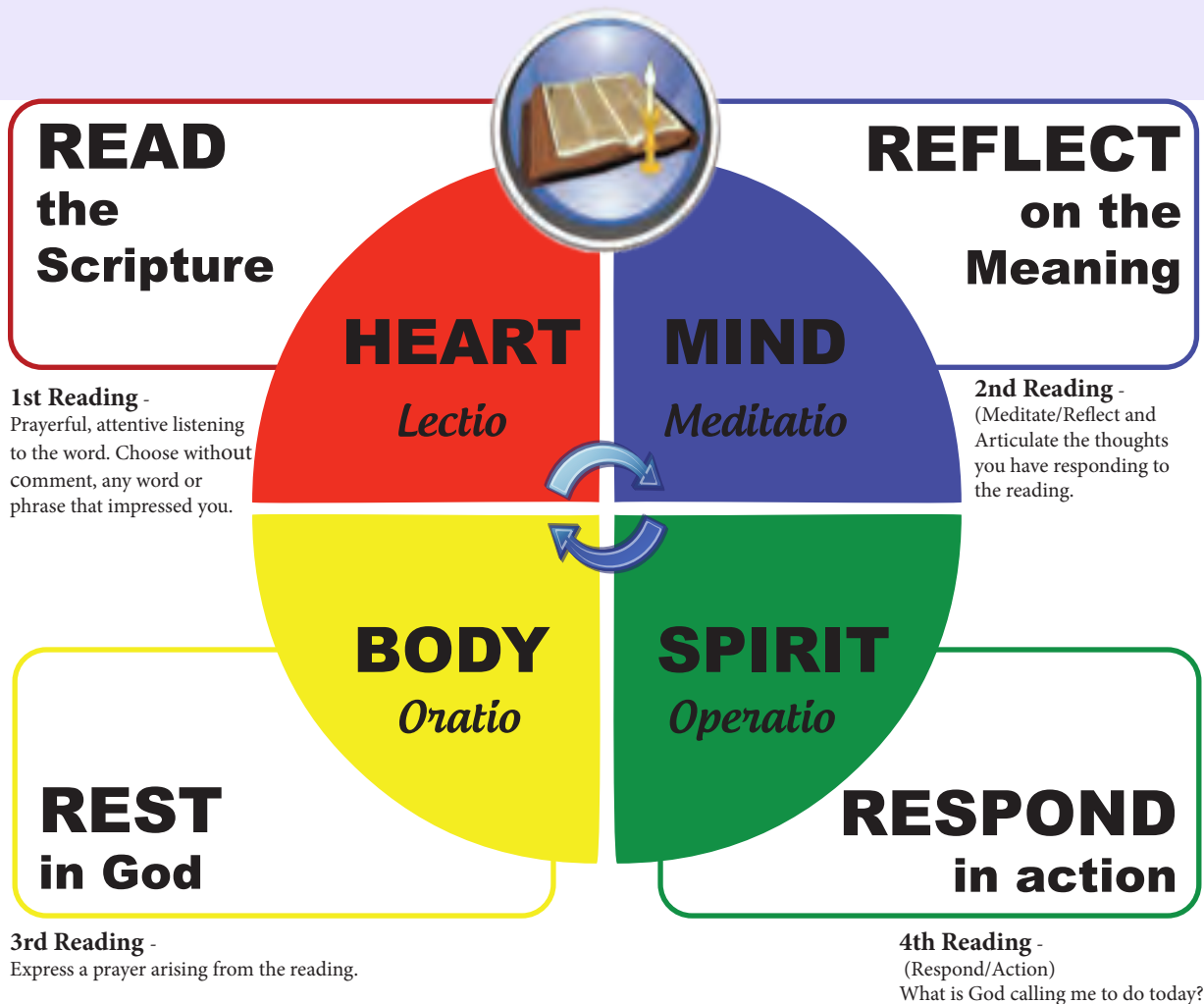
WE must not imagine that the way of self-denial is always a way of tranquillity and uninterrupted peace. It does not resolve all doubts and deliver us from every care as if by magic. Self-denial attunes us to the Spirit of God and the Spirit may not always sing a tune that harmonizes with our nature. There may be terrible discords instead of tranquil harmonies. Self-denial brings order into our lives sometimes in the form of an apparent disorder, and we may sometimes have to find peace as best we can in the midst of confusion.

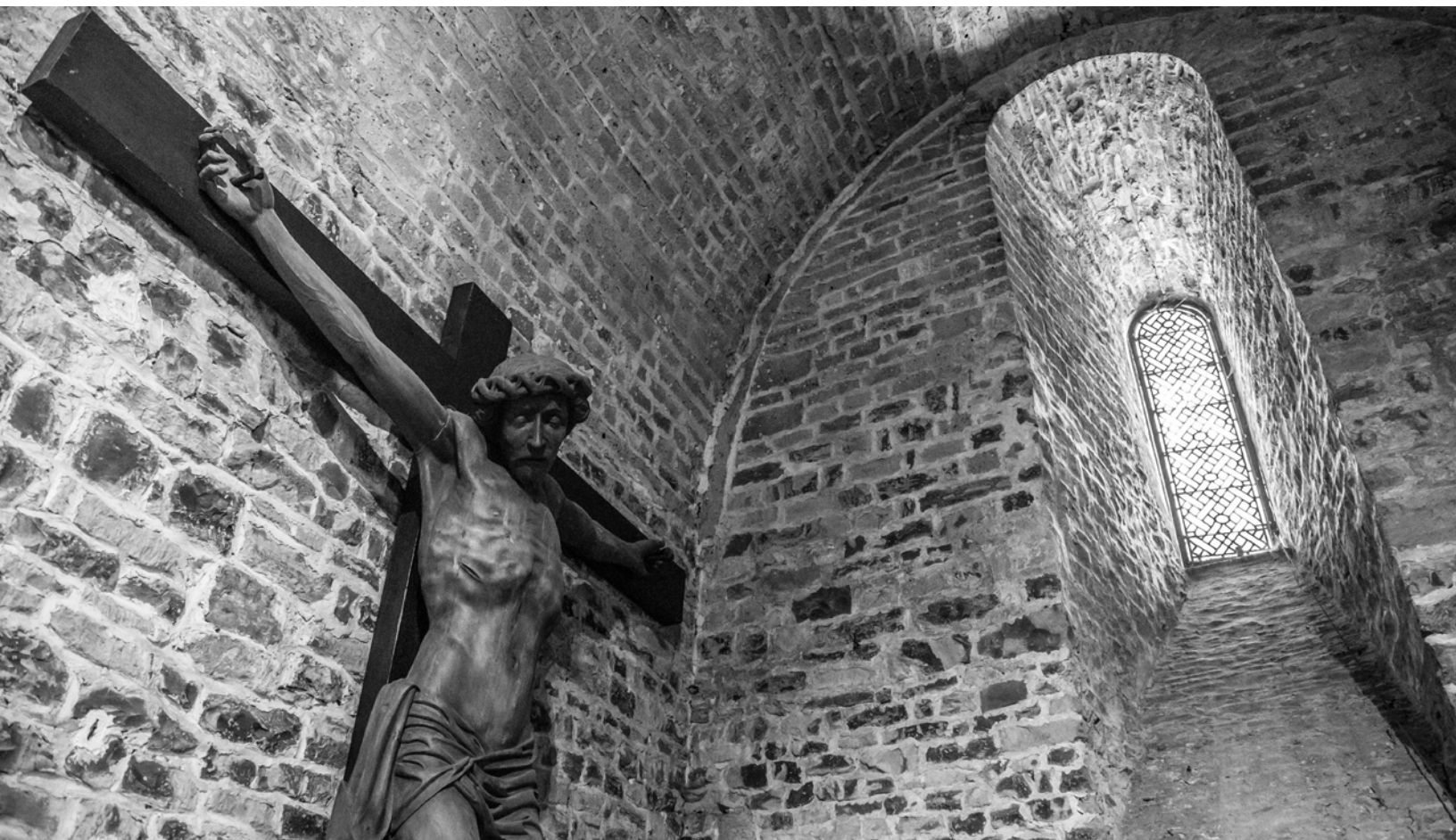
Thomas Merton

THURSDAY, MAR 11

Lk 11:14-23

Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute, and when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke and the crowds were amazed. Some of them said, "By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons." Others, to test him, asked him for a sign from heaven. But he knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house. And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that it is by Beelzebul that I drive out demons. If I, then, drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man fully armed guards his palace, his possessions are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him, he takes away the armor on which he relied and distributes the spoils. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."





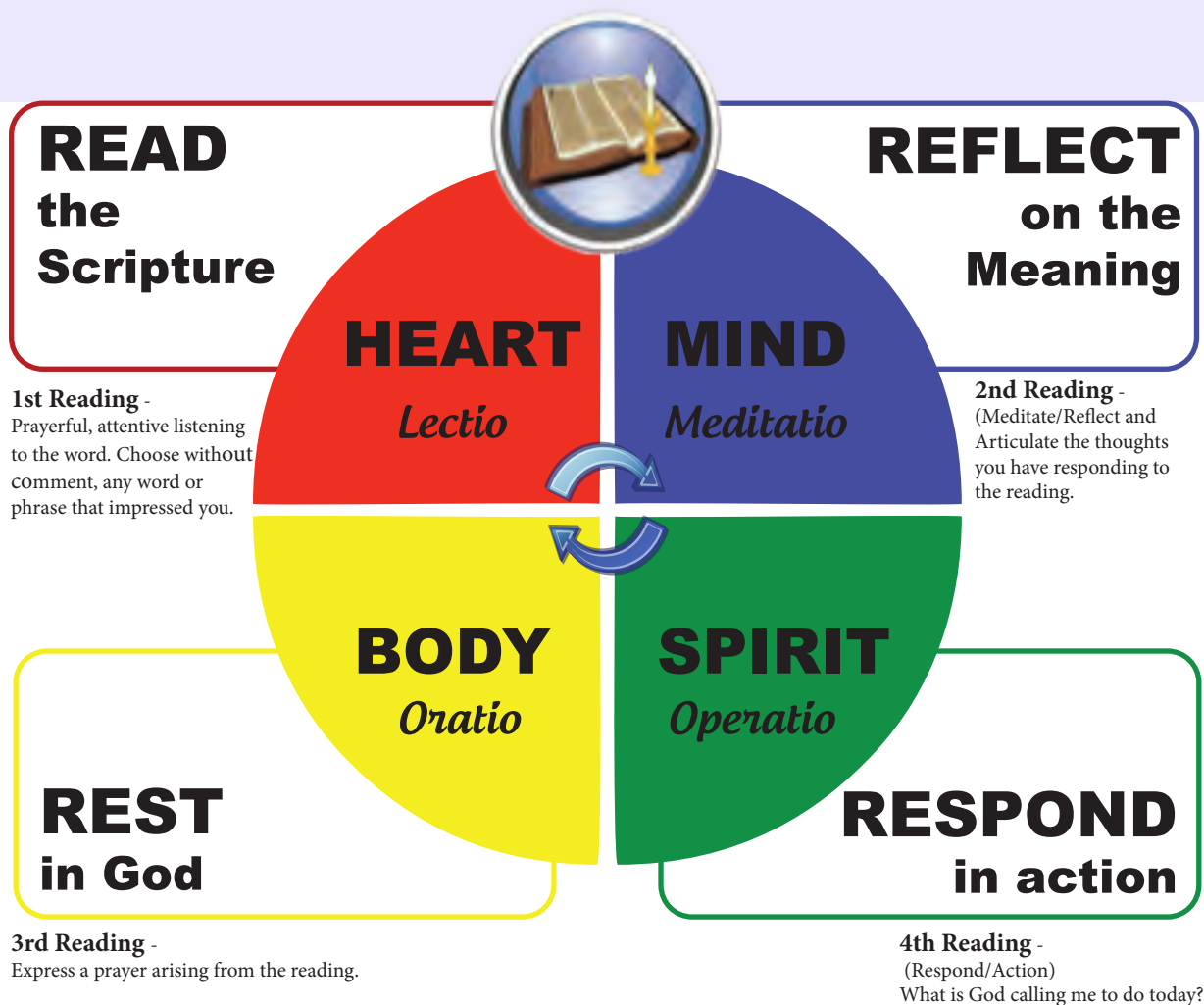
LET the us poor, fast in so that such a that we lavish our lunches upon the poor, so that we way may not store in our purses what we intended to eat, but rather in the stomachs of the poor.

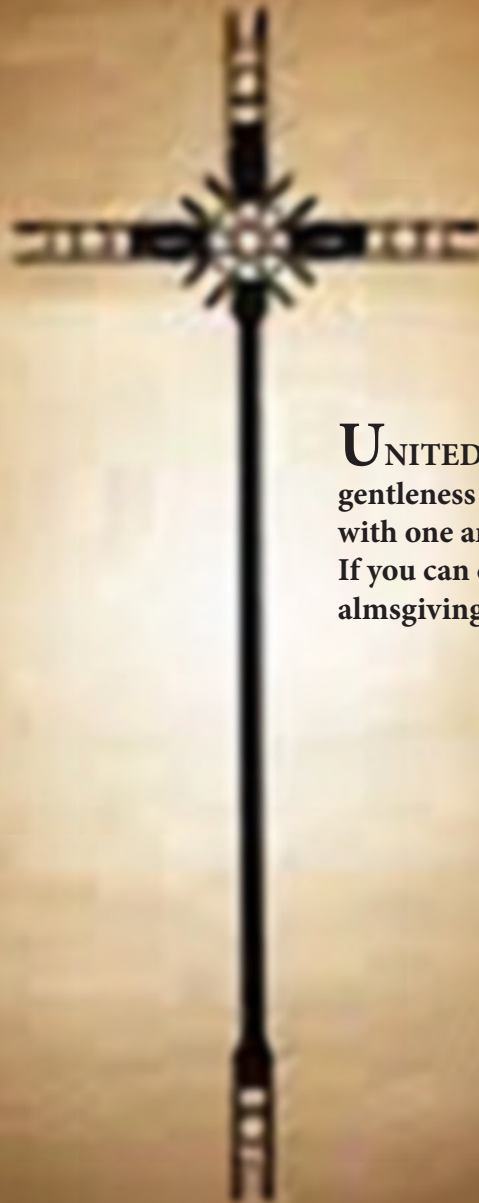
Caesarius of Arles, 6 c.

FRIDAY, MAR 12

Mk 12:28-34

One of the scribes came to Jesus and 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 neighbor 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 neighbor 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.





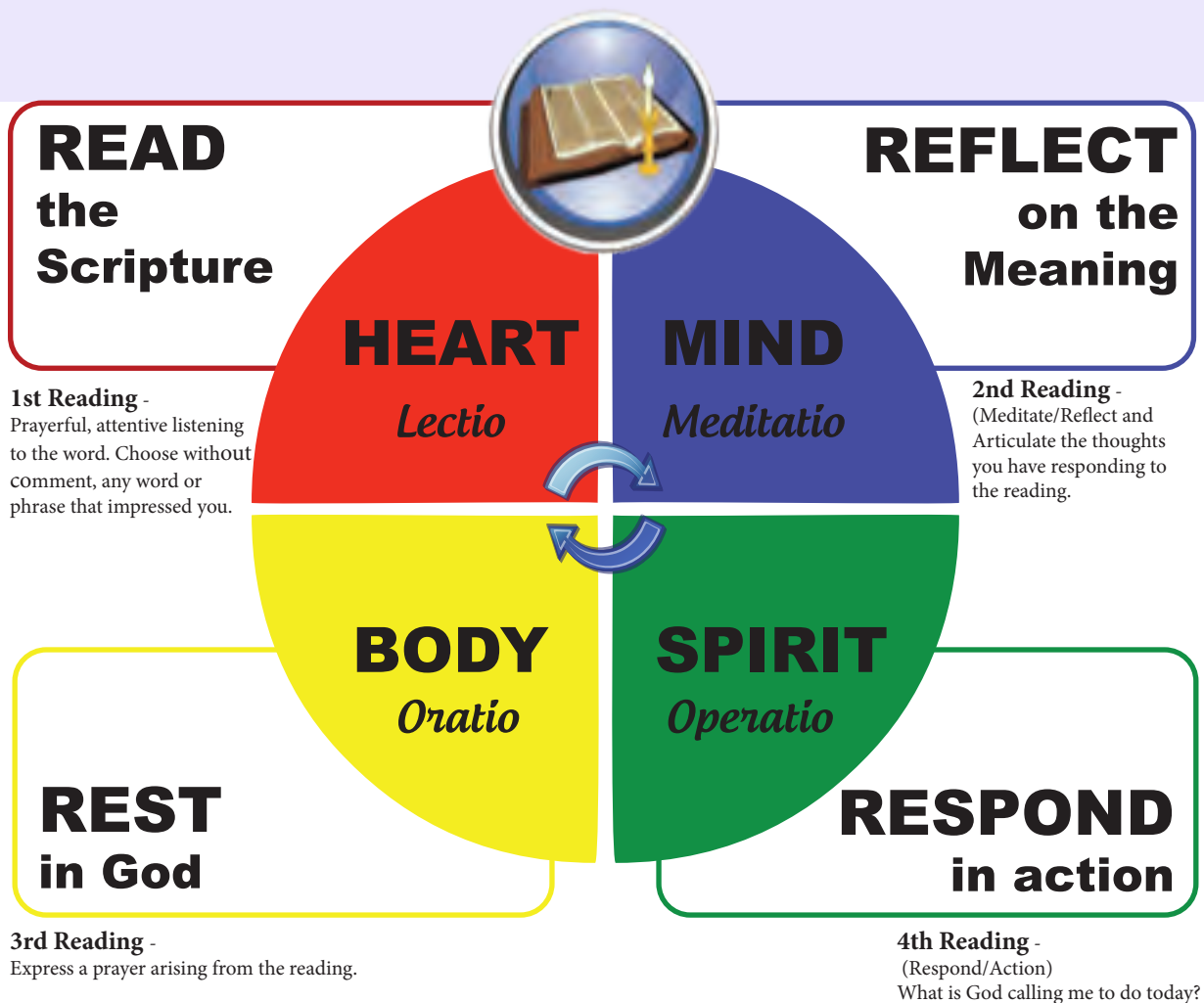
UNITED in truth, show the Lord's own gentleness in your dealings in your dealings with one another and look down on no one. If you can do good, do not put it off, because almsgiving frees you from death.

Polycarp of Smyrna, 2 c.

SATURDAY, MAR 13

Lk 18:9-14

Jesus 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.”





THOSE who pray as well as work at the tasks they have to do, and combine their prayer with suitable activity, will be praying always. That is the only way in which it is possible never to stop praying.
Origen, 3 c.

SUNDAY, MAR 14

Jn 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

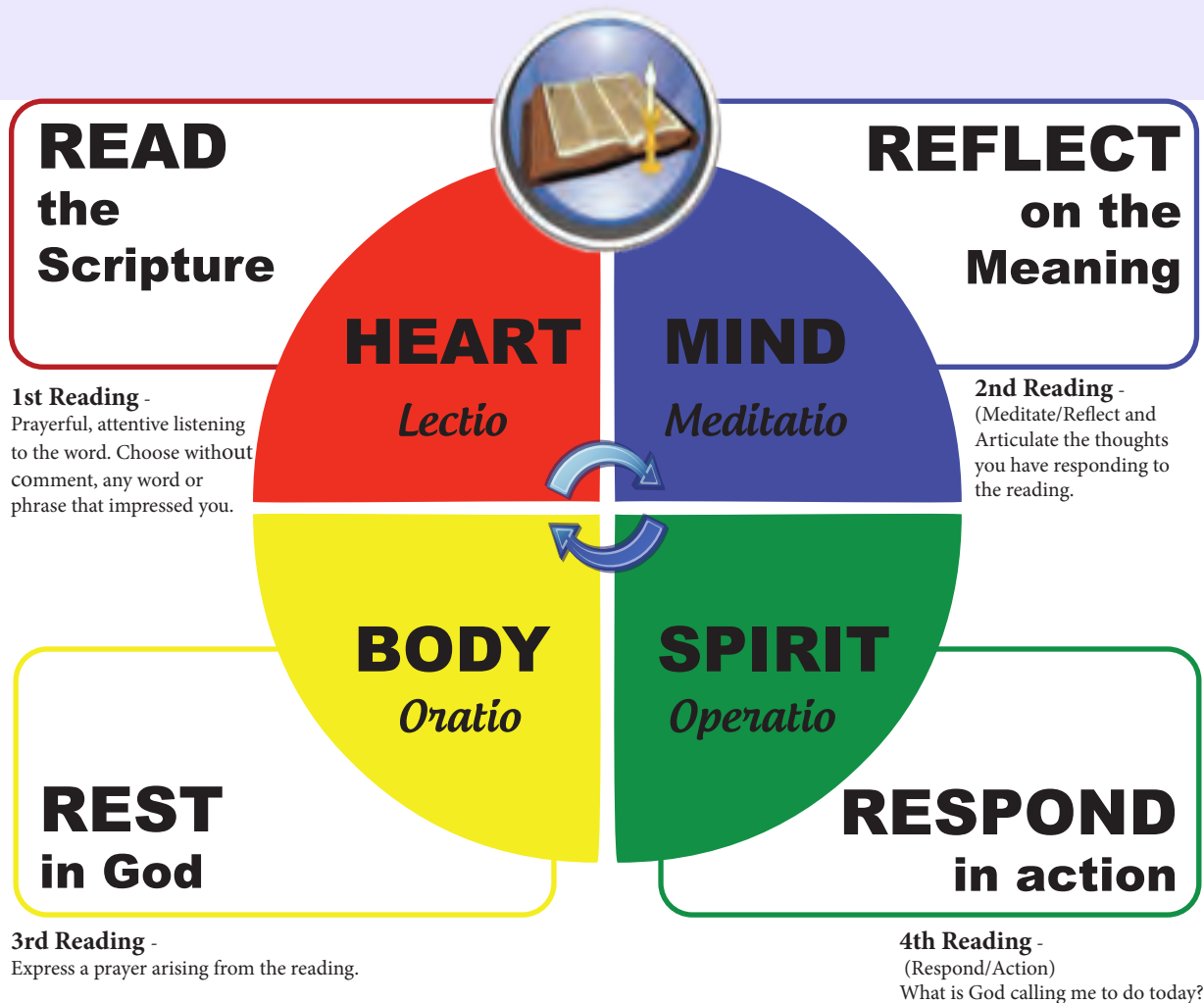
As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth. He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam" — which means Sent —. So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

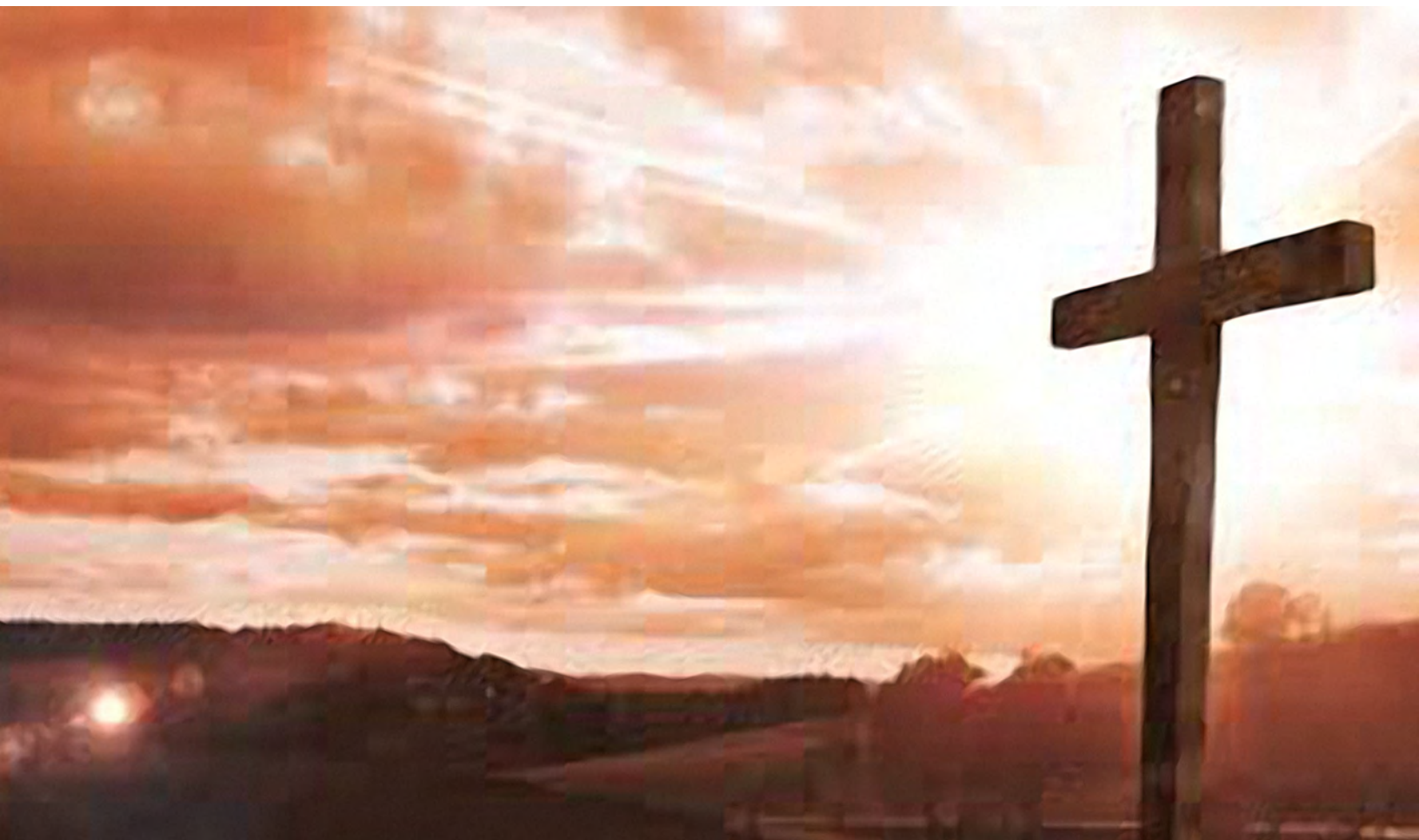
His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is," but others said, "No, he just looks like him." He said, "I am."

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath. So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see." So some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a sinful man do such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, "What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

They answered and said to him, "You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered and said, "Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him.





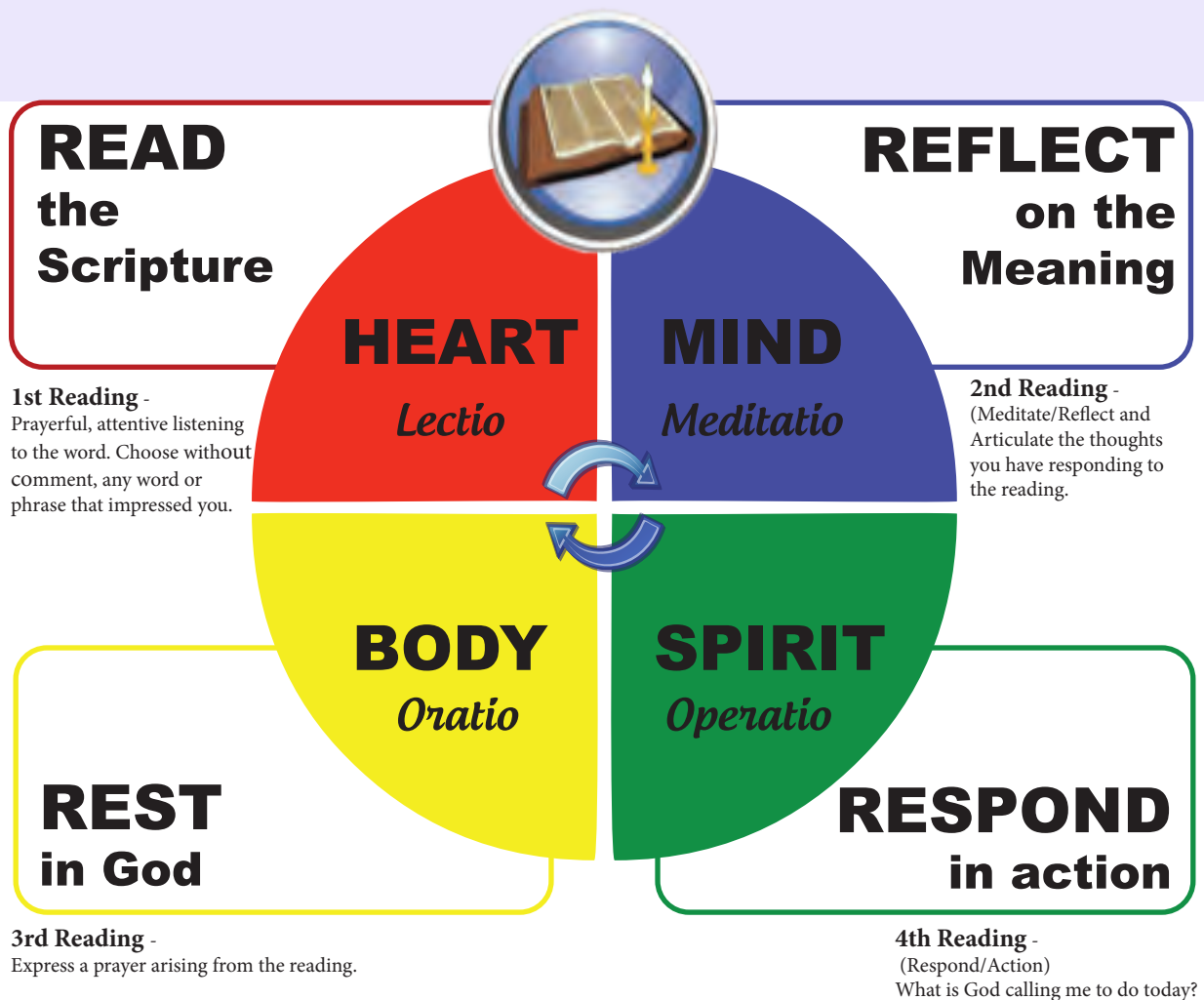
CEASELESS interior prayer is a continual yearning of the human spirit toward God. To succeed in this consoling exercise we must pray more often to God to teach us to pray without ceasing. Pray more, and pray more fervently. It is prayer itself which will reveal to you how it can be achieved unceasingly; but it will take some time.

The Way of the Pilgrim

MONDAY, MAR 15

Jn 4:43-54

At that time Jesus left [Samaria] for Galilee. For Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his native place. When he came into Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since they had seen all he had done in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves had gone to the feast. Then he returned to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. Now there was a royal official whose son was ill in Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, who was near death. Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe." The royal official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus said to him, "You may go; your son will live." The man believed what Jesus said to him and left. While the man was on his way back, his slaves met him and told him that his boy would live. He asked them when he began to recover. They told him, "The fever left him yesterday, about one in the afternoon." The father realized that just at that time Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live," and he and his whole household came to believe. Now this was the second sign Jesus did when he came to Galilee from Judea.





THE Baal Shem said: “Imagine a man whose business hounds him through many streets and across the market place the livelong day. He almost forgets that there is a Maker of the world. Only when the time for the Afternoon Prayer comes does he remember: ‘I must pray.’ And then, from the bottom of his heart, he heaves a sigh of regret that he has spent his day on vain and idle matters, and he runs into a bystreet and stands there and prays: God holds him dear, very dear, and his prayer pierces the firmament.”

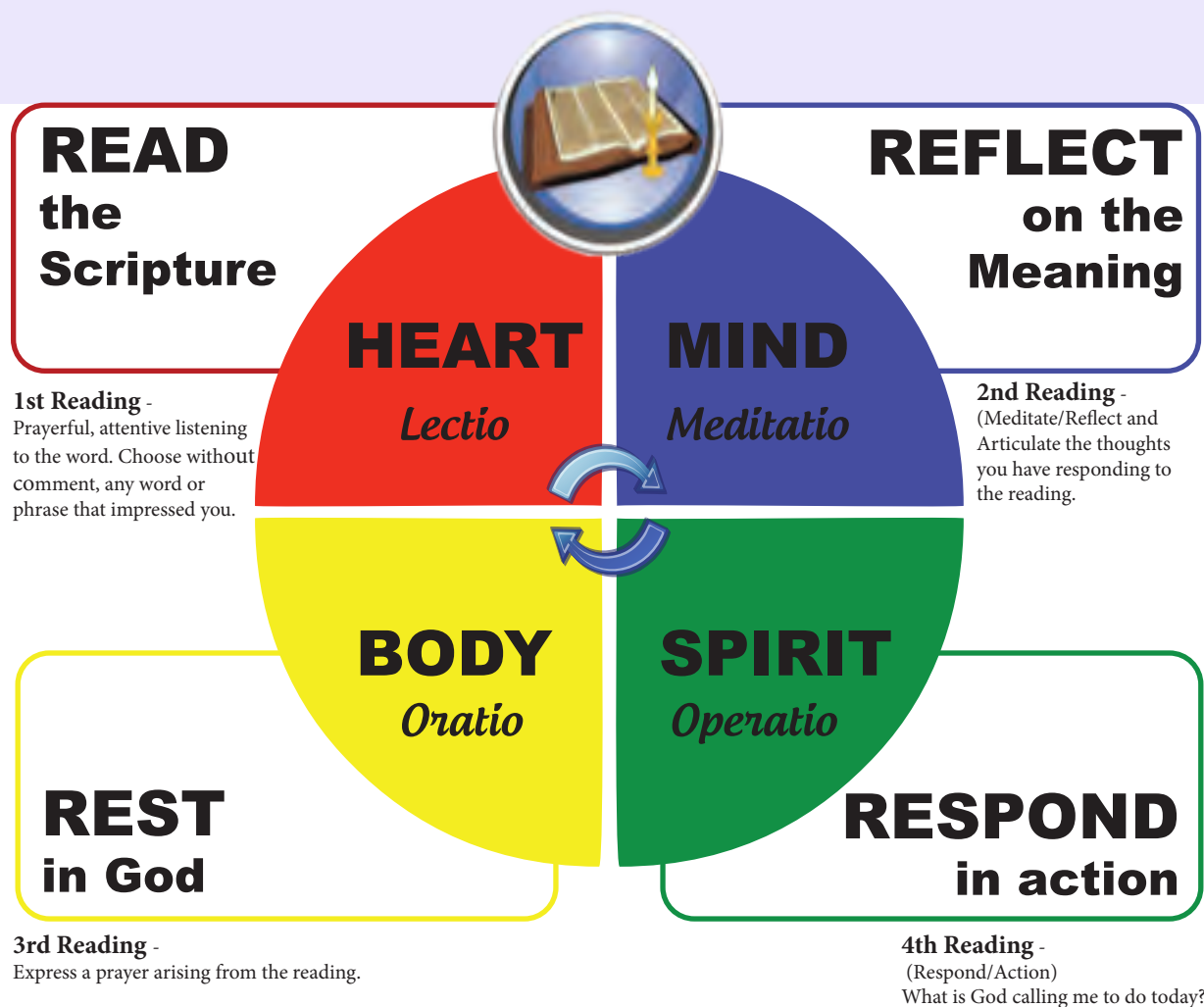
Martin Buber

TUESDAY, MAR 16

Jn 5:1-16

There was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem at the Sheep Gate a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda, with five porticoes. In these lay a large number of ill, blind, lame, and crippled. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been ill for a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your mat, and walk." Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked.

Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to carry your mat." He answered them, "The man who made me well told me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who told you, 'Take it up and walk'?" The man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away, since there was a crowd there. After this Jesus found him in the temple area and said to him, "Look, you are well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may happen to you." The man went and told the Jews that Jesus was the one who had made him well. Therefore, the Jews began to persecute Jesus because he did this on a sabbath.





MUCH has been lost which is essential to the proper performance of prayer. In olden times people knew that outward bearing and behavior were not superficial things. They become superficial only when they have lost their inner meaning. Gesture reaches from the hand back to the heart. Outward bearing is rooted in inner attitude. It expresses what lives within: what the heart feels and the mind intends. Conversely it can itself affect the inner life, giving stability and form.

Romano Guardini

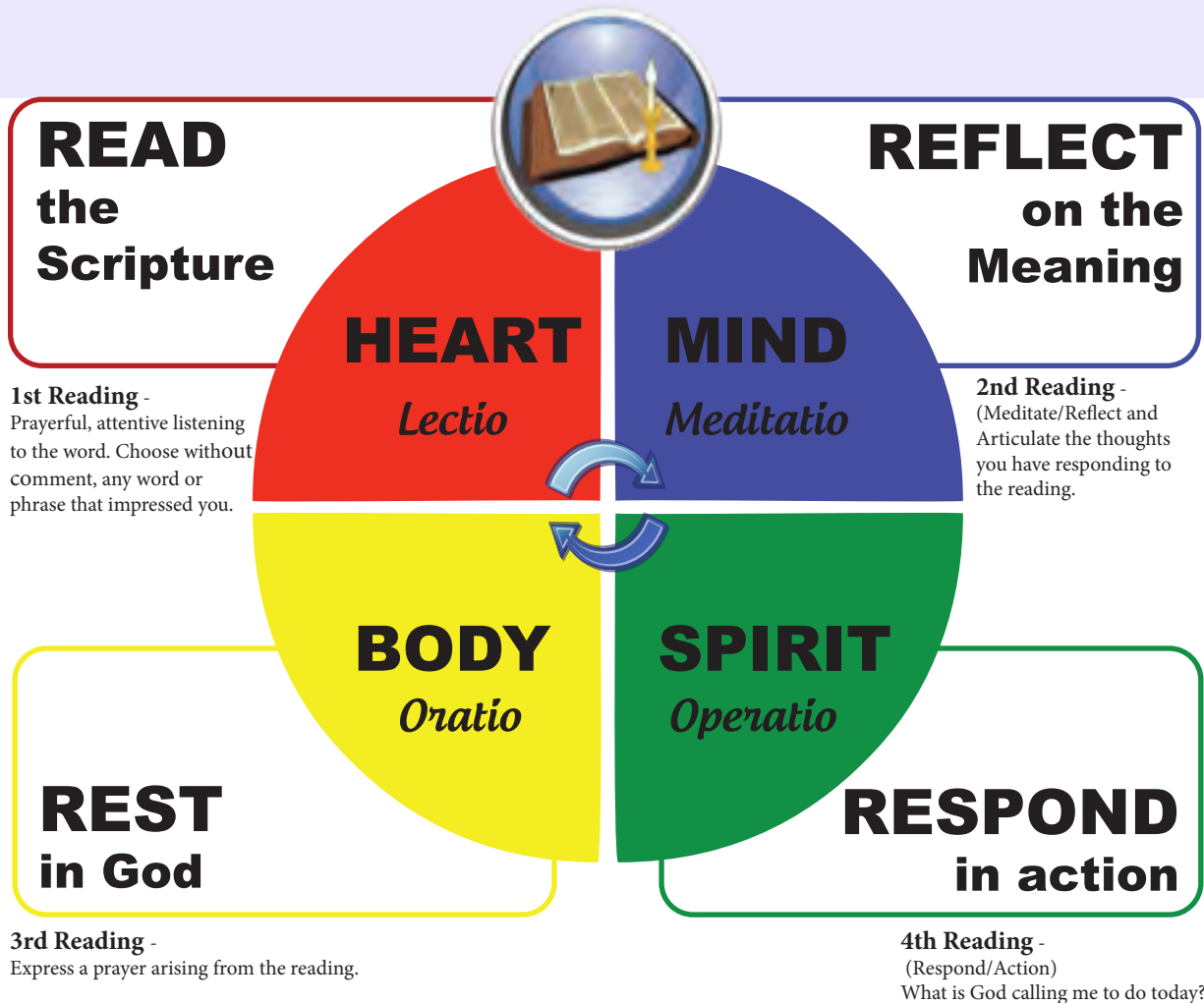
WEDNESDAY, MAR 17

Jn 5:17-30

Jesus answered the Jews: "My Father is at work until now, so I am at work." For this reason they tried all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but he also called God his own father, making himself equal to God.

Jesus answered and said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, the Son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for what he does, the Son will do also. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything that he himself does, and he will show him greater works than these, so that you may be amazed. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so also does the Son give life to whomever he wishes. Nor does the Father judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life. Amen, amen, I say to you, the hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so also, he gave to the Son the possession of life in himself. And he gave him power to exercise judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, because the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation.

"I cannot do anything on my own; I judge as I hear, and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me."





THE wind is howling, the waves are roaring, the ship is about to break up into a thousand pieces; everybody is busy, everybody tries to help; some work, others pray; all efforts, all energies are being mobilized; everybody is trying to be useful except Jonah. What is his contribution to the collective rescue operation? Incredible but true: In that hour of crisis and mortal danger, when the world is upside down, when creation is in turmoil, the prophet—who should, by definition, be more sensitive, more the prophet—who should, by definition, be more sensitive, more alert, more tense than the common mortal --- is asleep!

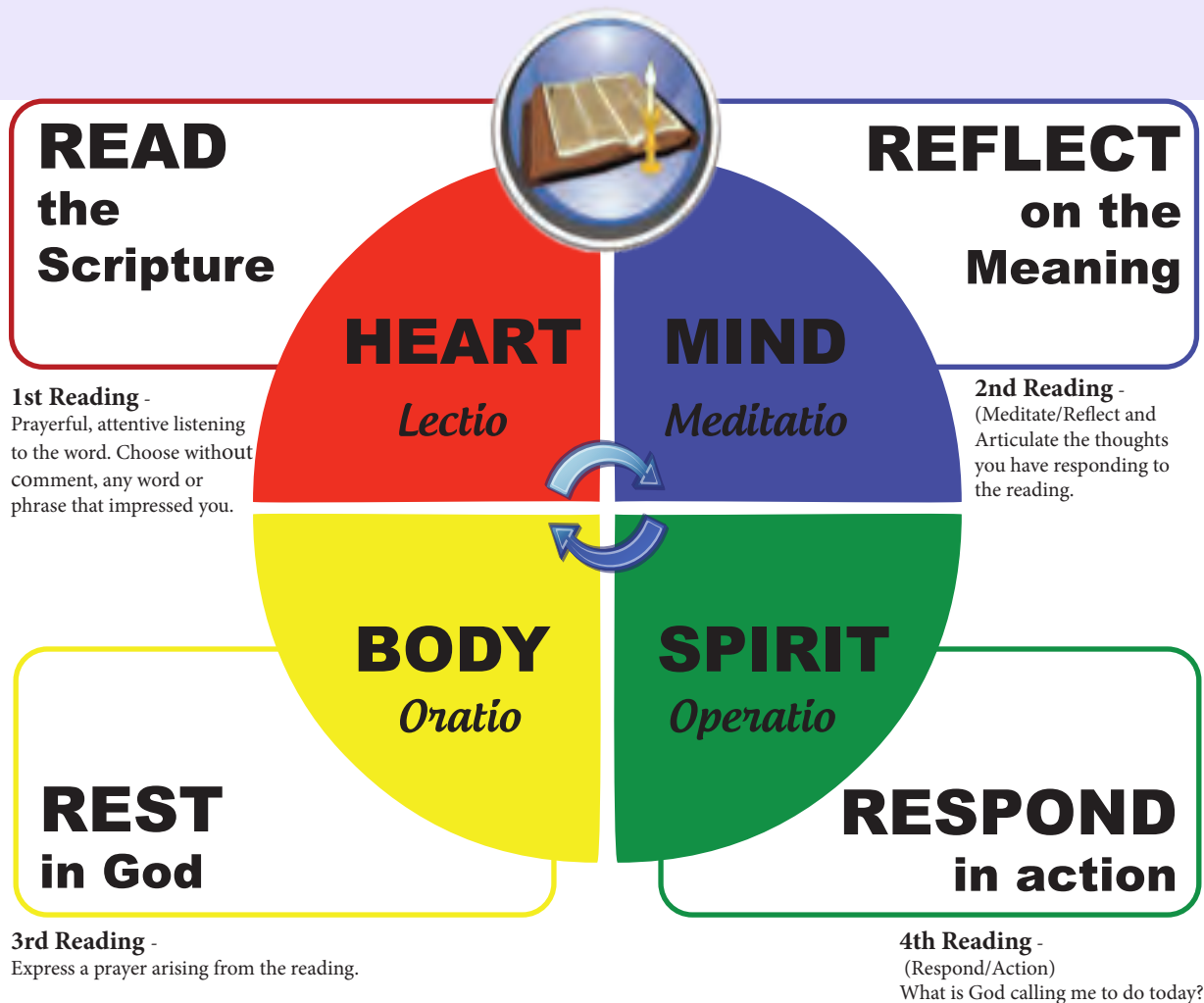
Elie Wiesel

THURSDAY, MAR 18

Jn 5:31-47

Jesus said to the Jews: "If I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is not true. But there is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that the testimony he gives on my behalf is true. You sent emissaries to John, and he testified to the truth. I do not accept human testimony, but I say this so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and for a while you were content to rejoice in his light. But I have testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father gave me to accomplish, these works that I perform testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. Moreover, the Father who sent me has testified on my behalf. But you have never heard his voice nor seen his form, and you do not have his word remaining in you, because you do not believe in the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think you have eternal life through them; even they testify on my behalf. But you do not want to come to me to have life.

"I do not accept human praise; moreover, I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I came in the name of my Father, but you do not accept me; yet if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe, when you accept praise from one another and do not seek the praise that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father: the one who will accuse you is Moses, in whom you have placed your hope. For if you had believed Moses, you would have believed me, because he wrote about me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"





THE basic disease is sloth.

It is that strange laziness and passivity of our entire being which always pushes us “down” rather than “up” - which constantly convinces us that no change is possible and therefore desirable.

It is in fact a deeply rooted cynicism which to every spiritual challenge responds “what for?” and makes our life one tremendous spiritual waste.

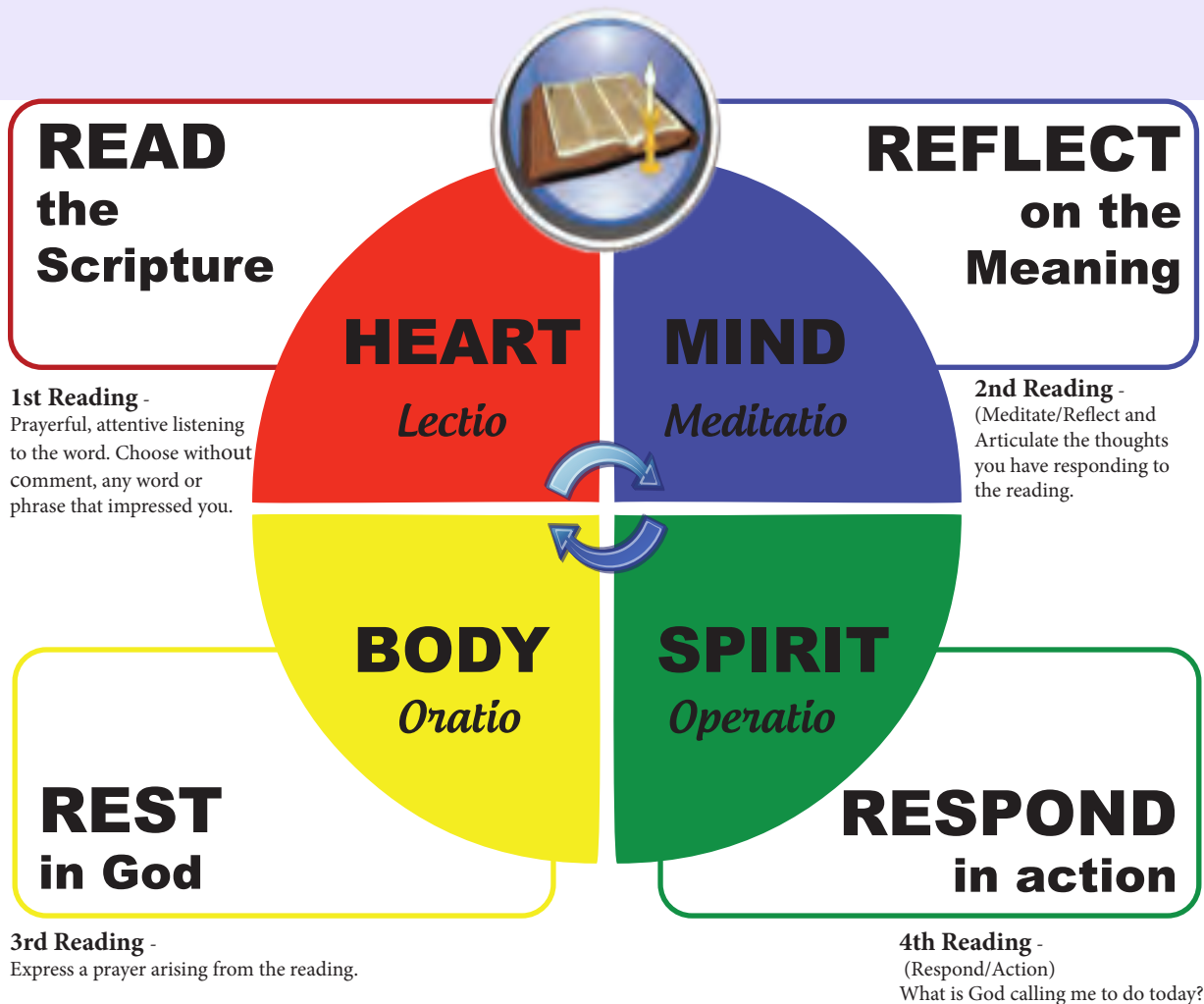
It is the root of all sin because it poisons the spiritual energy at its source.

Alexander Schememann

FRIDAY, ST. JOSEPH, MAR 19

Lk 2:41-51a

Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.





AMONG the symbols found in ancient Judaeo-Christian ossuaries is the ship. And this ship is just what we should expect, with the transverse yard on the mast giving it the form of a cross; in this way the ship with its rigging becomes a figure of the saving cross. This seems to be the oldest form of the ship's salvation symbolism. And it persisted, for even when the ship became identified with the church, the mast remained a symbol of the cross.

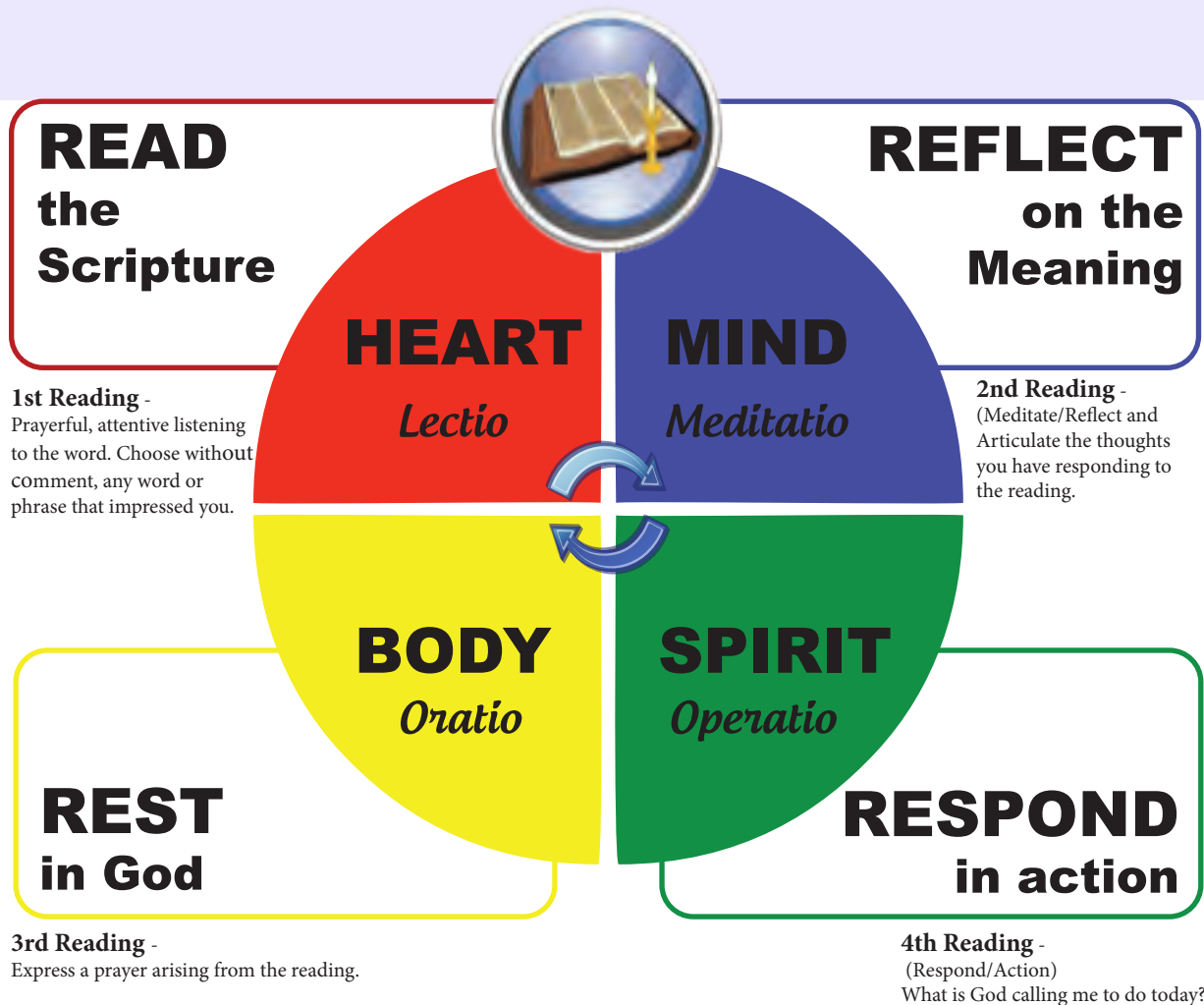
Jean Danielou

SATURDAY, MAR 20

Jn 7:40-53

Some in the crowd who heard these words of Jesus said, "This is truly the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But others said, "The Christ will not come from Galilee, will he? Does not Scripture say that the Christ will be of David's family and come from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?" So a division occurred in the crowd because of him. Some of them even wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

So the guards went to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not bring him?" The guards answered, "Never before has anyone spoken like this man." So the Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law, is accursed." Nicodemus, one of their members who had come to him earlier, said to them, "Does our law condemn a man before it first hears him and finds out what he is doing?" They answered and said to him, "You are not from Galilee also, are you? Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee." Then each went to his own house.





THE true self-denial of the Christian is not a conquest of self by self, but a dying to self in order to live to God in Christ. This is the great question that preoccupied St. Paul the problem of seeking salvation by the works of the law instead of by grace. Our salvation is not to be found in asceticism alone but in the cross of Christ. Self-denial, however rigorous, lacks all Christian meaning apart from the cross and resurrection of Christ. This is why Lent is a season of mortification and renouncement: not just because Christians discovered that a little fasting in springtime was good for their constitutions, but because their fasts, renunciations and almsdeeds had an essential part to play as signs of a full participation in the Easter Mystery.

Thomas Merton

SUNDAY, MAR 21

Jn 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45

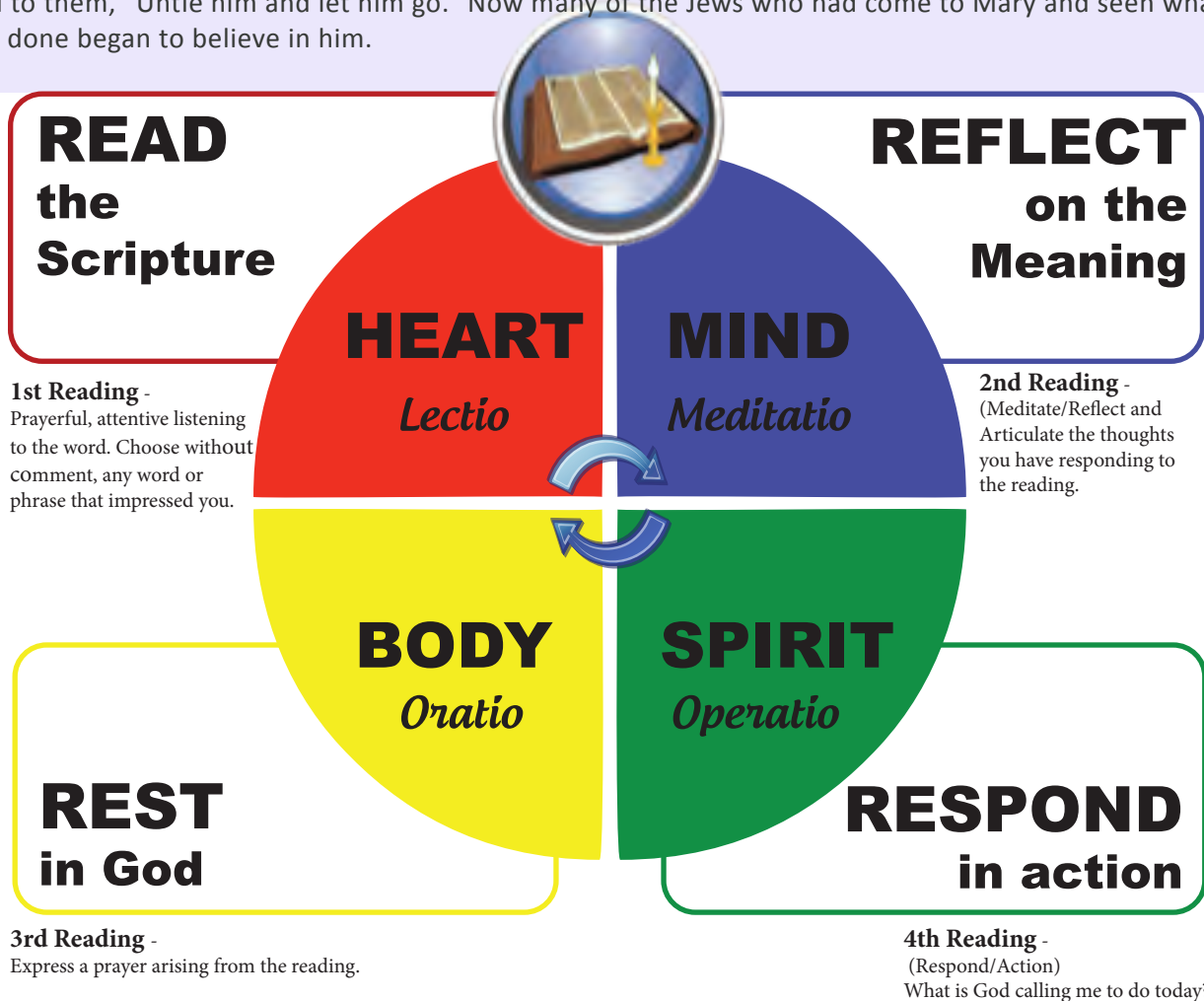
The sisters of Lazarus sent word to Jesus, saying, "Master, the one you love is ill." When Jesus heard this he said, "This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was. Then after this he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her,

"Your brother will rise." Martha said, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." He became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see."

And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?"

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And when he had said this, He cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.





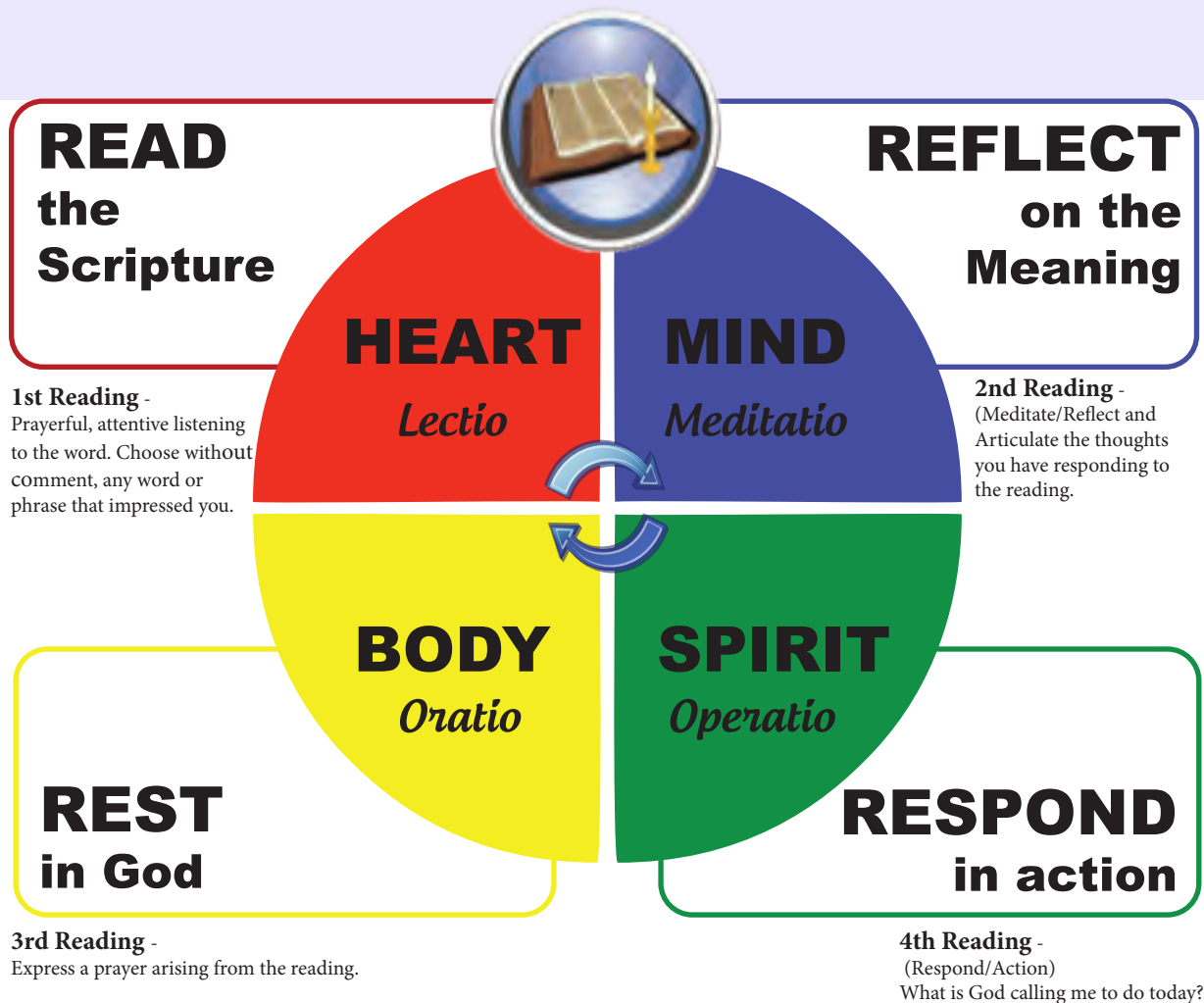
HERE is only one purpose for punishment, and that is to teach a lesson, and there is only one lesson to be taught, and that is love. Perfect love banishes fear, and when we are not afraid we know that love which includes forgiveness. When the lesson to be learned is not love, that is not punishment; it is revenge or retribution. Probably the lesson of love is the most terrible punishment of all-an almost intolerable anguish-for it means that the sinner has to realize what has been done, has to be truly sorry, to repent, to turn to God. And most of us are too filled with outrage at rape and murder to want the sinner to repent. We want the sinner to feel terrible, but not to turn to God and be made whole and be forgiven. And so we show that we do not know the meaning of forgiveness any more than Jonah did in his vindictive outrage at the people of Nineveh.

Madeleine L'Engle

MONDAY, MAR 22

Jn 8:1-11

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more."





SCRIPTURE does not say of the people of Nineveh that God saw their sackcloth and fasting, but “God saw their works.
The Mishnah

TUESDAY, MAR 23

Jn 8:21-30

Jesus said to the Pharisees: "I am going away and you will look for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come."

So the Jews said, "He is not going to kill himself, is he, because he said, 'Where I am going you cannot come'?"

He said to them, "You belong to what is below, I belong to what is above. You belong to this world, but I do not belong to this world.

That is why I told you that you will die in your sins.

For if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins."

So they said to him, "Who are you?"

Jesus said to them, "What I told you from the beginning.

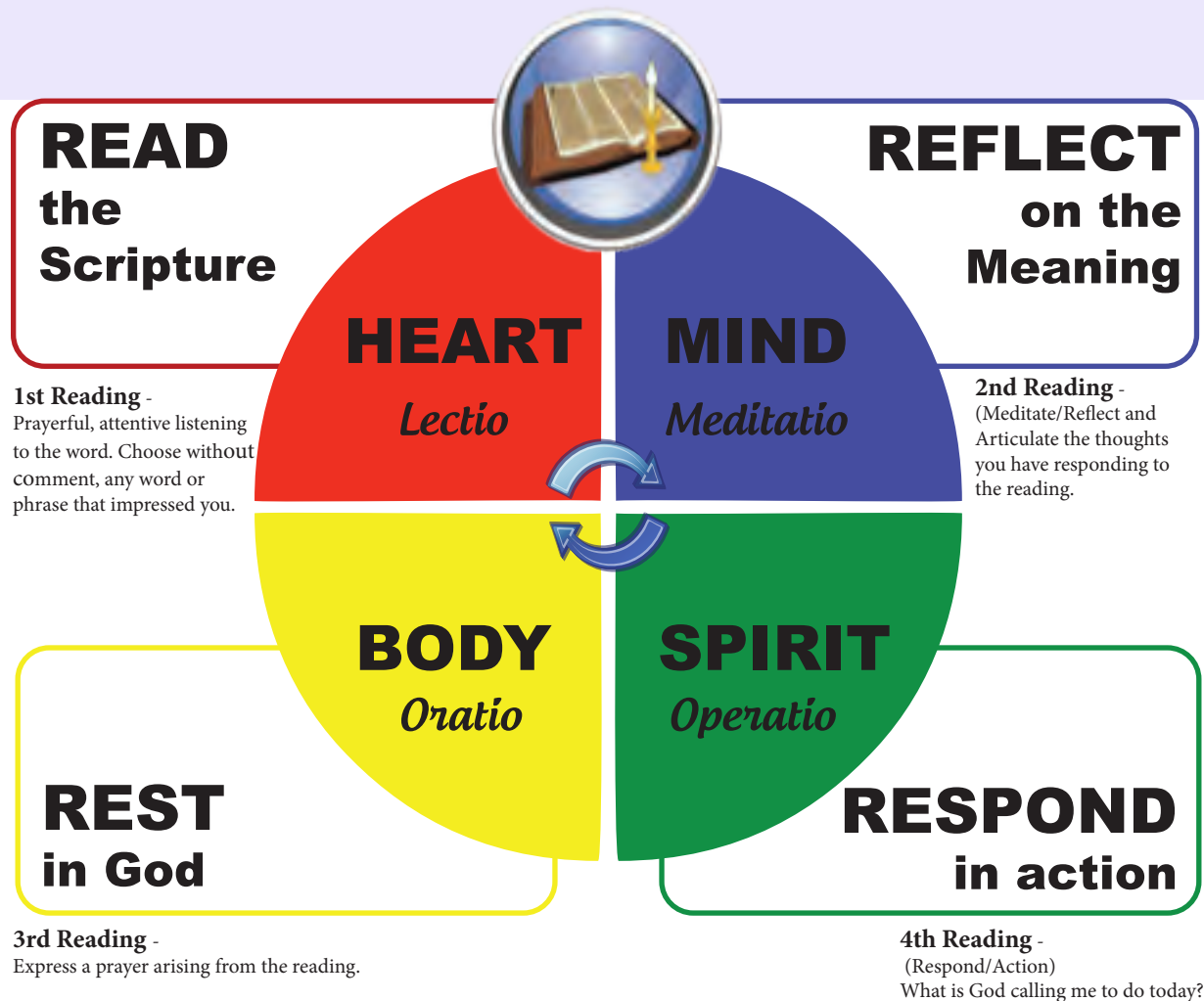
I have much to say about you in condemnation.

But the one who sent me is true, and what I heard from him I tell the world."

They did not realize that he was speaking to them of the Father.

So Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM, and that I do nothing on my own, but I say only what the Father taught me.

The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to him." Because he spoke this way, many came to believe in him.





TESHUVA [in Hebrew, repentance. from shuvah, “to turn”] means an act of conscious, of awareness, of willingness to take sides and responsibility for the future. One cannot modify the past, but one is given the power to shape the future. It all depends on individuals and the community; they can, if they wish, foil destiny and celebrate free choice. The lesson in Jonah is that nothing is written, nothing is sealed: God’s will itself may change. Even though punishment has been programmed, it may be cancelled. Therein lies the beauty and the grandeur of Jewish tradition: Every human being is granted one more chance, one more opportunity to start life all over again. Just as God has the power to begin, we have the power to continue by beginning again-and again.

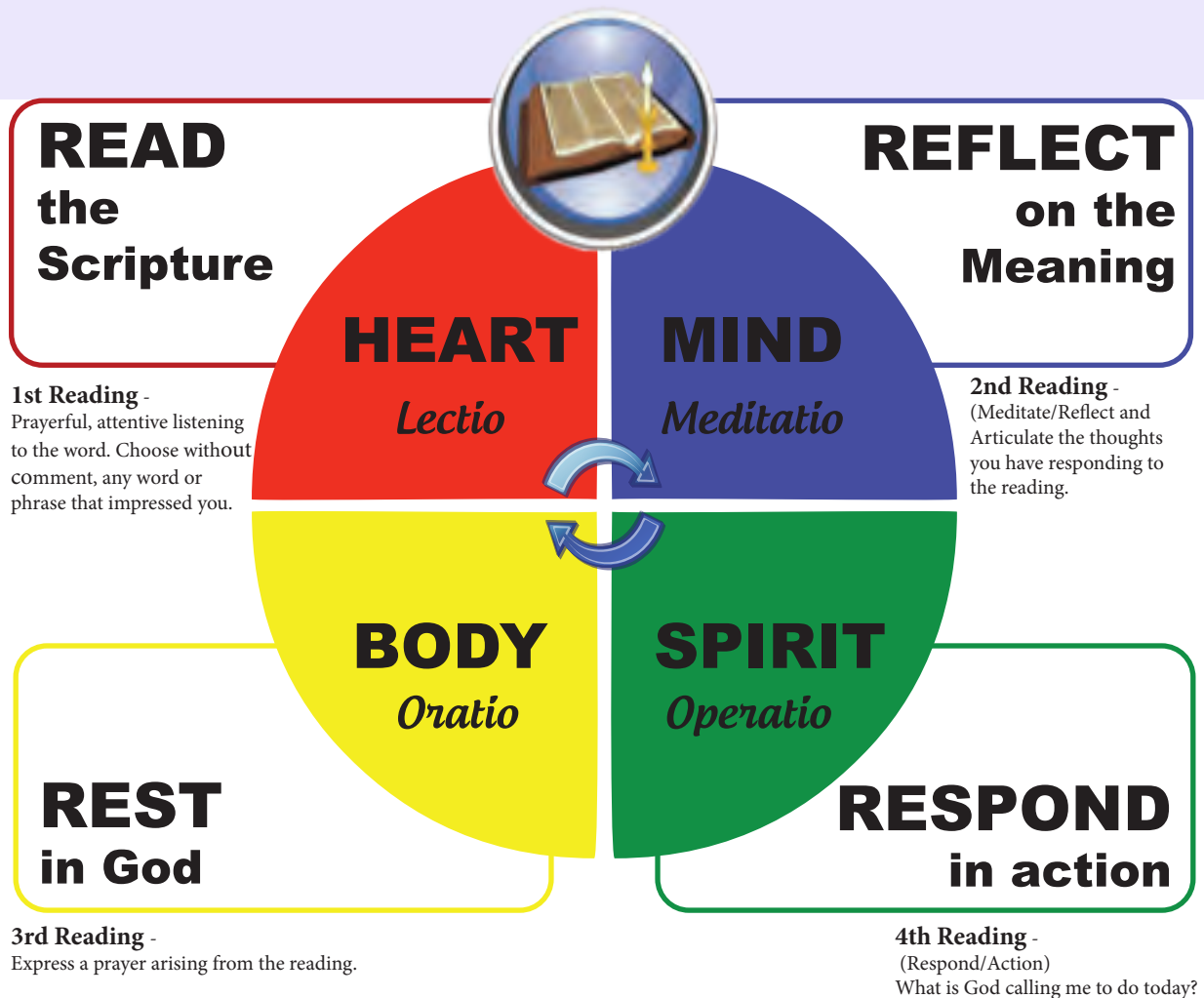
Elie Wiesel

WEDNESDAY, MAR 24

Jn 8:31-42

Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. A slave does not remain in a household forever, but a son always remains. So if the Son frees you, then you will truly be free. I know that you are descendants of Abraham. But you are trying to kill me, because my word has no room among you. I tell you what I have seen in the Father's presence; then do what you have heard from the Father."

They answered and said to him, "Our father is Abraham." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works of Abraham. But now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God; Abraham did not do this. You are doing the works of your father!" So they said to him, "We were not born of fornication. We have one Father, God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and am here; I did not come on my own, but he sent me."





COME, sinners, to the gospel feast, Let every soul be Jesus' guest;
Ye need not be one left behind, For God hath bidden all humankind.

Sent by my Lord, on you I call; The invitation is to all:
Come, all the world; come, sinner, thou! All things in Christ are ready now.

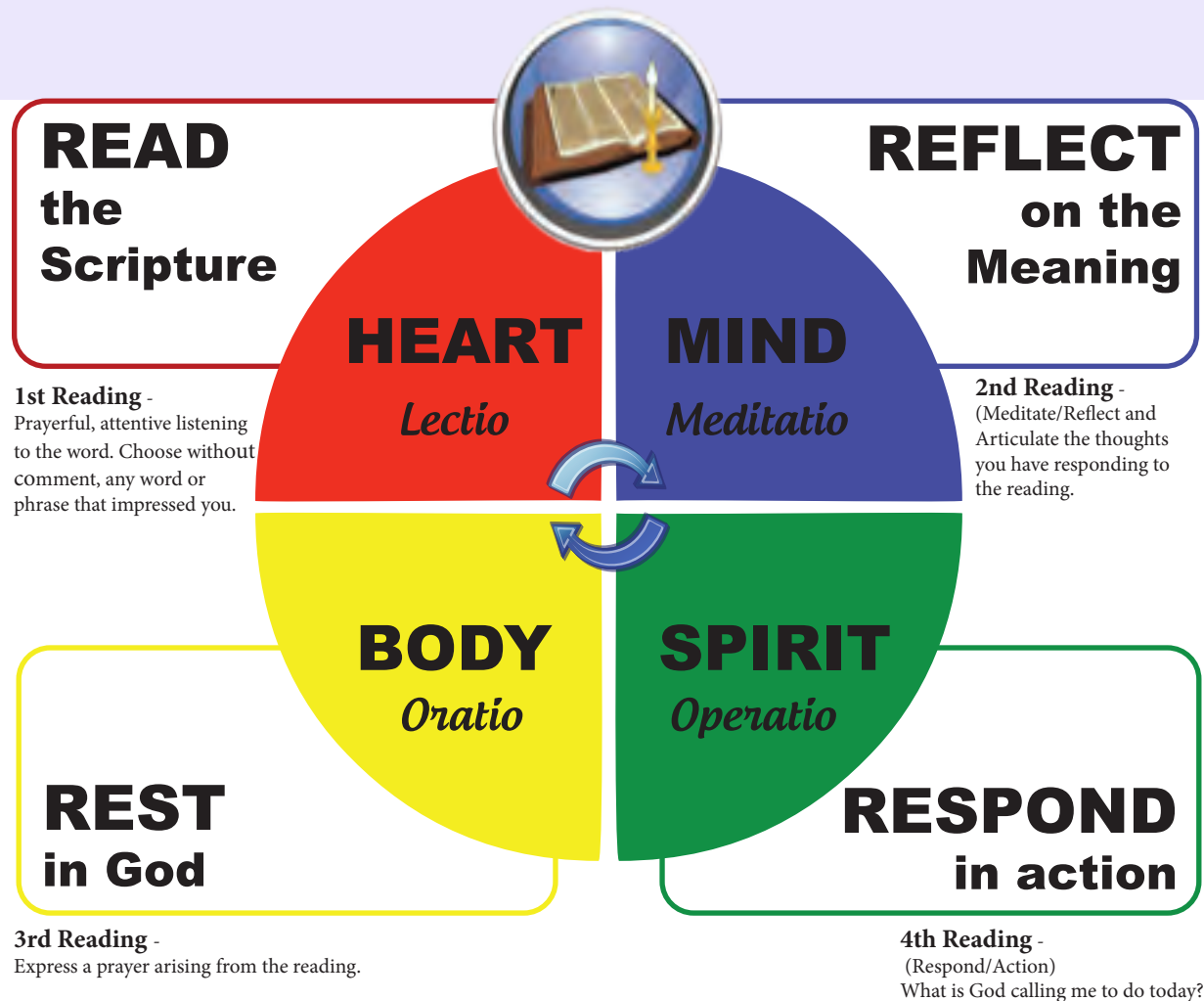
Come, all ye souls by sin oppressed, Ye restless wanderers after rest,
Ye poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind, In Christ a hearty welcome find.

Charles Wesley, 18 c.

THURSDAY, MAR 25

Lk 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.





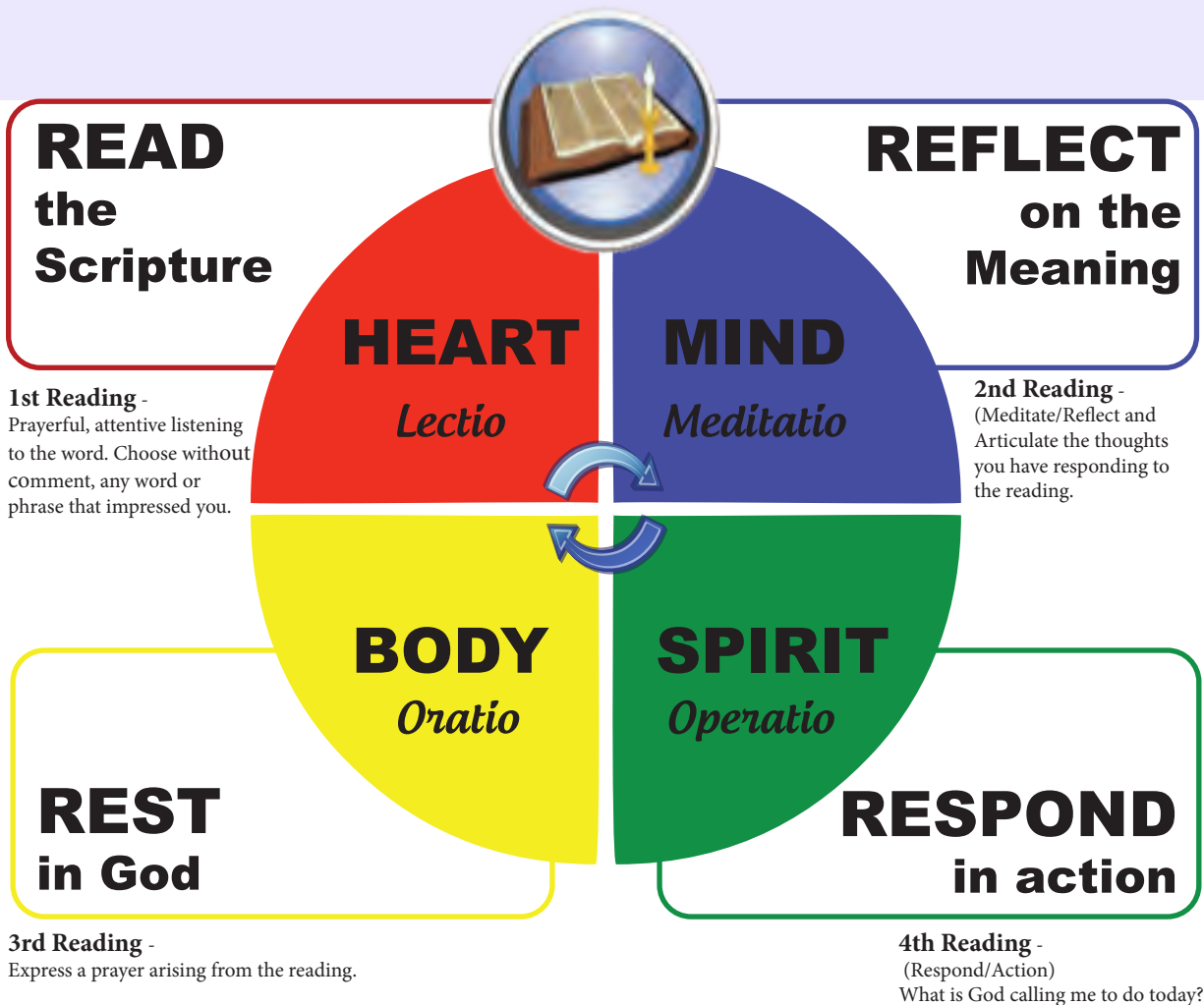
Still live in me this loving strife
Of living Death and dying Life.
For while thou sweetly slayest me,
Dead to my selfe, I live in thee.
Richard Grashaw

FRIDAY, MAR 26

Jn 10:31-42

The Jews picked up rocks to stone Jesus. Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from my Father. For which of these are you trying to stone me?" The Jews answered him, "We are not stoning you for a good work but for blasphemy. You, a man, are making yourself God." Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, 'You are gods''? If it calls them gods to whom the word of God came, and Scripture cannot be set aside, can you say that the one whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world blasphemes because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I do not perform my Father's works, do not believe me; but if I perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may realize and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." Then they tried again to arrest him; but he escaped from their power.

He went back across the Jordan to the place where John first baptized, and there he remained. Many came to him and said, "John performed no sign, but everything John said about this man was true." And many there began to believe in him.





ACTUALLY there are only two philosophies of life: one is first the feast and then the headache; the other is first the fast and then the feast. Deferred joys purchased by sacrifice are always the sweetest.

Fulton J. Sheen

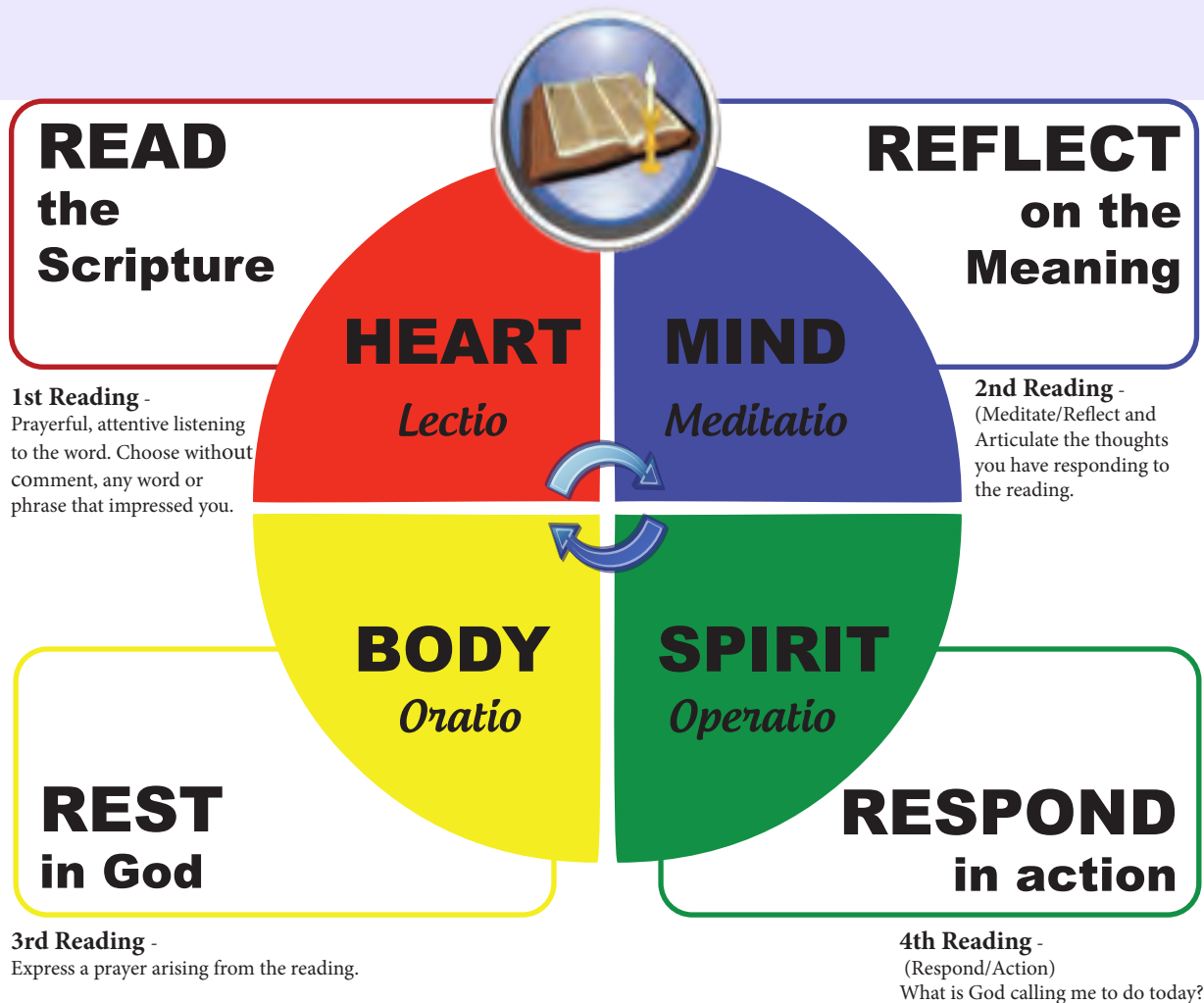
SATURDAY, MAR 27

Jn 11:45-56

Many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what Jesus had done began to believe in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said, "What are we going to do? This man is performing many signs. If we leave him alone, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our land and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing, nor do you consider that it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish." He did not say this on his own, but since he was high priest for that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God. So from that day on they planned to kill him.

So Jesus no longer walked about in public among the Jews, but he left for the region near the desert, to a town called Ephraim, and there he remained with his disciples.

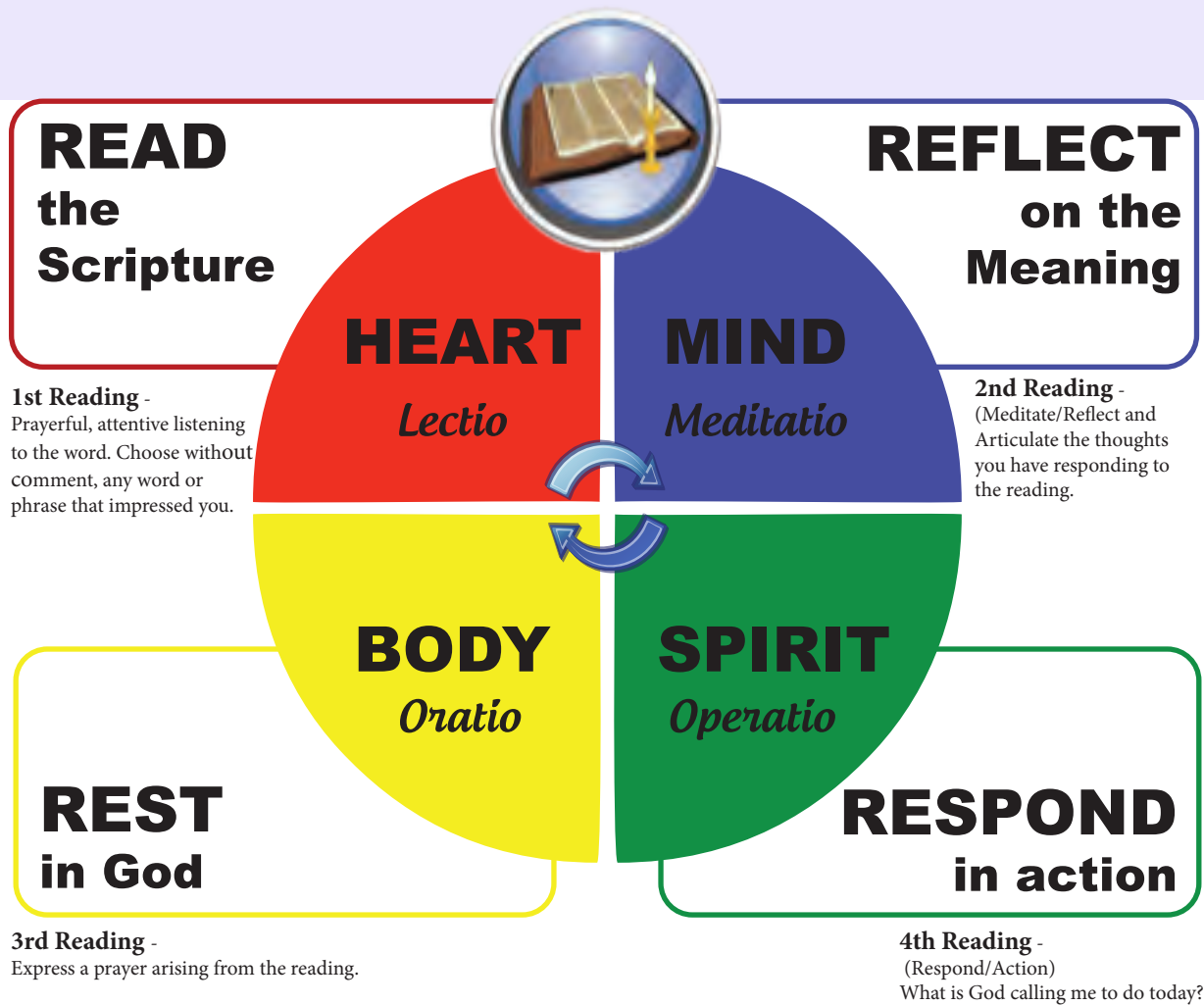
Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before Passover to purify themselves. They looked for Jesus and said to one another as they were in the temple area, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast?"





Do not think that you will have part in the paschal festivity if you neglect to restore fraternal peace. Before God, you who are not in charity will not be counted in the number of God's children. Through the distribution of alms and the care of the poor, let the Christian fasts become fertile; and what each person withholds from self-indulgence, let that person spend for the weak and the needy. Let care be taken that all may bless God as with one mouth, and let those who give away some portion of their substance know that they are the ministers of the mercy of God, who has placed the portion of the poor in the hand of the bountiful.

Leo, 5th c.





There is no excuse from the good work of forgiveness, since it depends entirely upon the will. One may say, my health is poor and I cannot fast. Or, I am afraid that if I give to the poor I will be in need.... But who can say I did not pardon the one asking forgiveness because my state of health prevented it or because I had no hand to stretch forth in kindness?

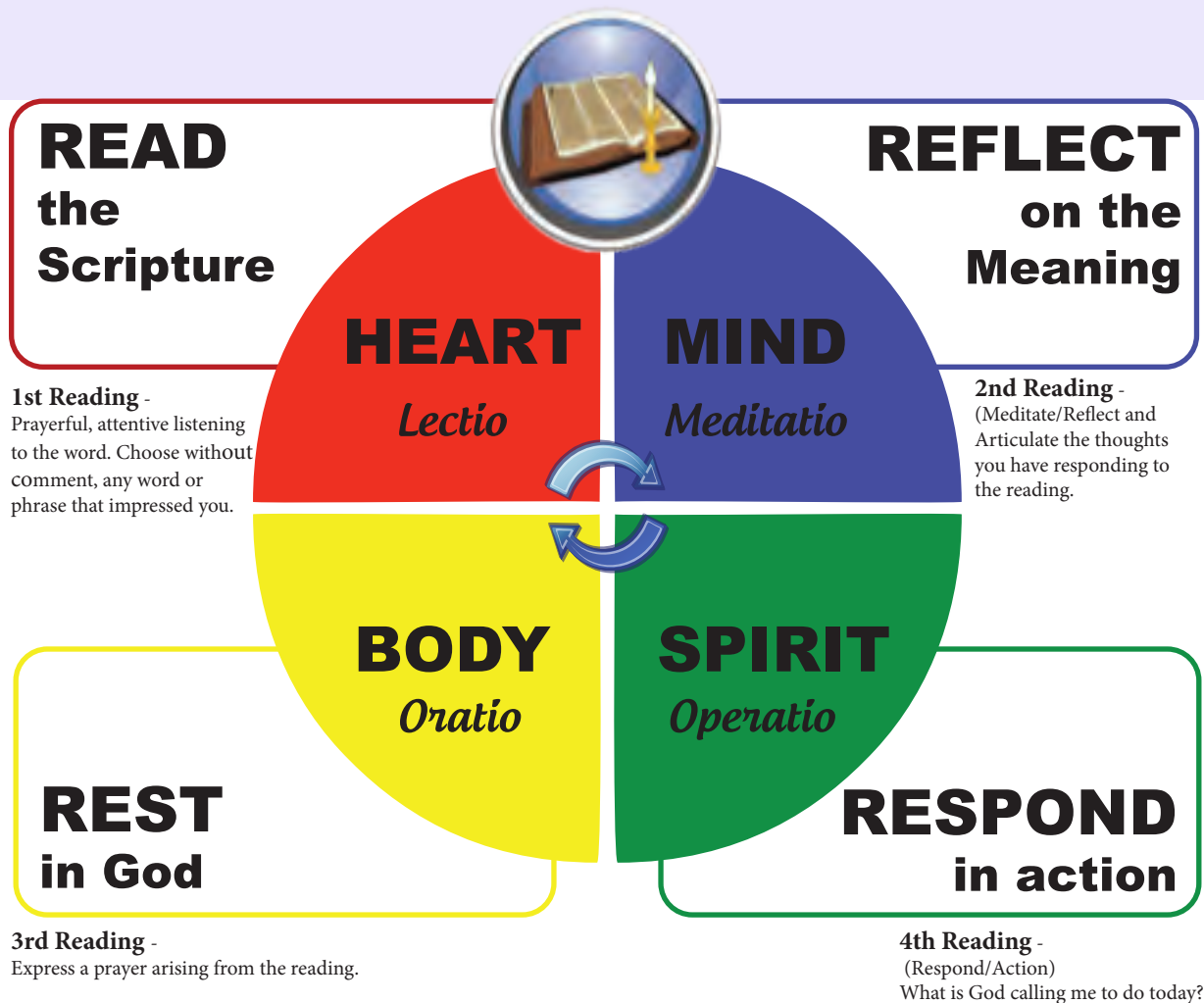
Augustine of Hippo, 5th c.

MONDAY, MAR 29

Jn 12:1-11

Six days before Passover Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. They gave a dinner for him there, and Martha served, while Lazarus was one of those reclining at table with him. Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair; the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Then Judas the Iscariot, one of his disciples, and the one who would betray him, said, "Why was this oil not sold for three hundred days' wages and given to the poor?" He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and held the money bag and used to steal the contributions. So Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

The large crowd of the Jews found out that he was there and came, not only because of him, but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. And the chief priests plotted to kill Lazarus too, because many of the Jews were turning away and believing in Jesus because of him.





ONE of the earliest testimonies to the existence of an annual ecclesial exercise of renewal, the origins of our present Lent, is to be found in the provision made by the fourth-century bishops' meeting at the Council of Nicea. Sentences of excommunication, they decreed, were to be reviewed "before the forty days." The timing of this review was decided in the light of a conviction about the meaning of Lent: "that the pure gift might be offered after all bitterness has been put away." The celebration of Pascha must be prepared for by a realistic attempt to heal the wounds of the church.

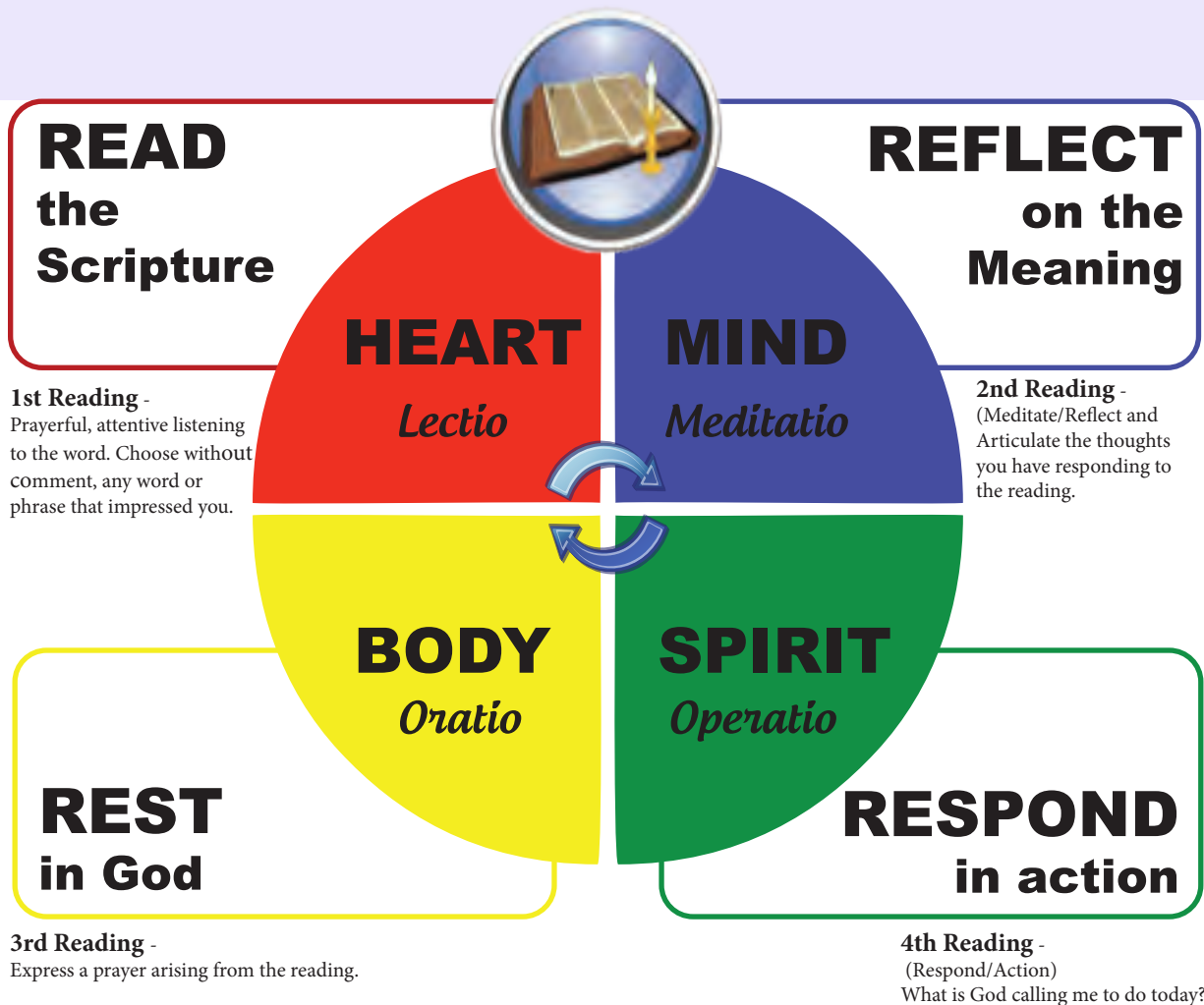
Mark Searle

TUESDAY, MAR 30

Jn 13:21-33, 36-38

Reclining at table with his disciples, Jesus was deeply troubled and testified, "Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, at a loss as to whom he meant. One of his disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was reclining at Jesus' side. So Simon Peter nodded to him to find out whom he meant. He leaned back against Jesus' chest and said to him, "Master, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I hand the morsel after I have dipped it." So he dipped the morsel and took it and handed it to Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot. After Judas took the morsel, Satan entered him. So Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Now none of those reclining at table realized why he said this to him. Some thought that since Judas kept the money bag, Jesus had told him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or to give something to the poor. So Judas took the morsel and left at once. And it was night. When he had left, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and he will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. You will look for me, and as I told the Jews, 'Where I go you cannot come,' so now I say it to you."

Simon Peter said to him, "Master, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, though you will follow later." Peter said to him, "Master, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Amen, amen, I say to you, the cock will not crow before you deny me three times."





THE church does not pretend, as it were, that it does not know what will happen with the crucified Jesus. It does not sorrow and mourn over the Lord as if the church itself were not the very creation which has been produced from his wounded side and from the depths of his tomb. All through the services the victory of Christ is contemplated and his Resurrection is proclaimed.

Thomas Hopko

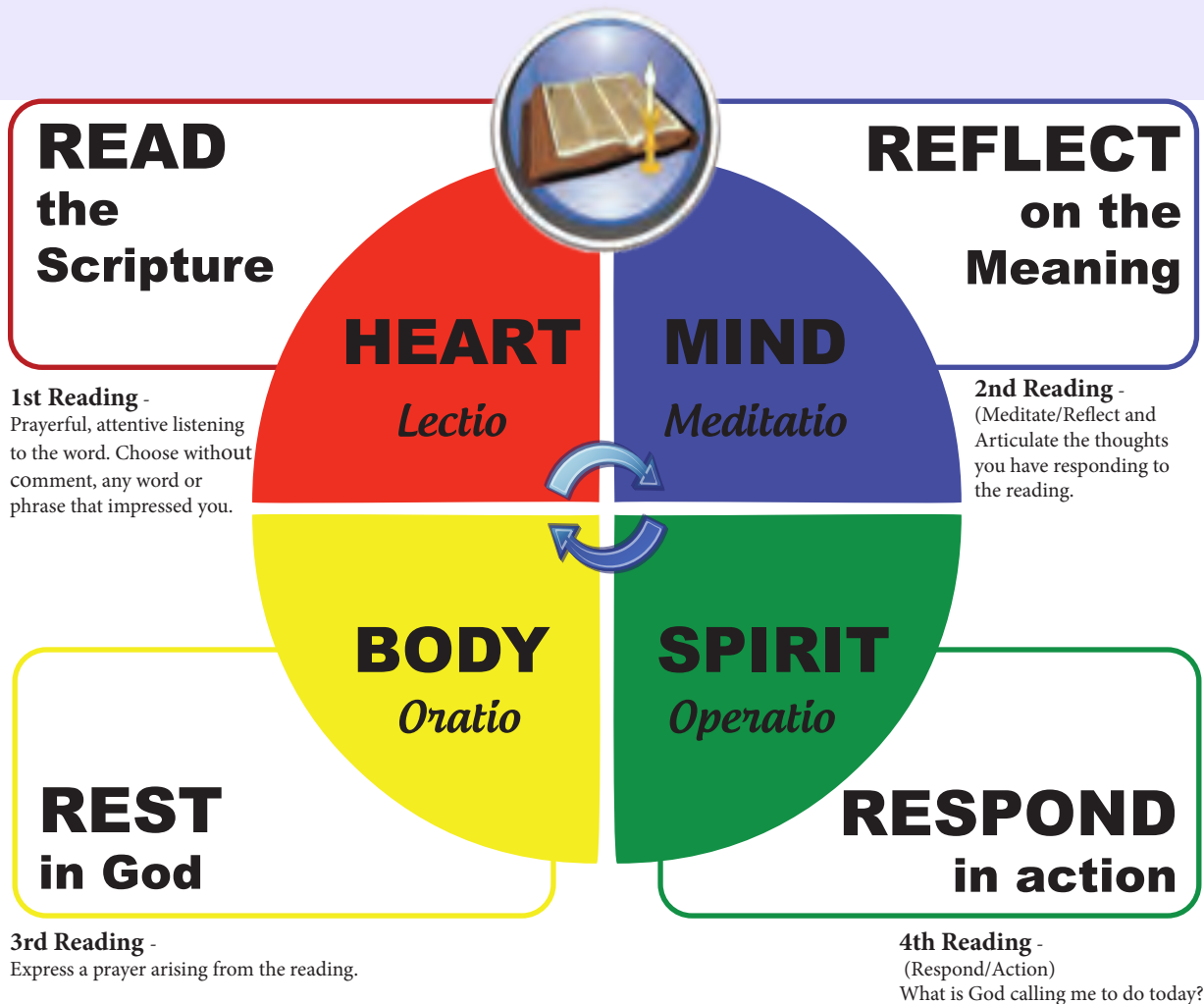
WEDNESDAY, MAR 31

Mt 26:14-25

One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The teacher says, My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.'" The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover.

When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me." Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, "Surely it is not I, Lord?" He said in reply, "He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born." Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" He answered, "You have said so."



Jesus, come, my feet are dirty. You have become a servant for my sake, so fill your basin with water; come, wash my feet. I know that I am bold in saying this, but your own words have made me fearful: "If I do not wash your feet, you will have no companionship with me." Wash my feet, then, so that I may be your companion. But what am I saying: "Wash my feet"? Peter could say these words, for all that needed washing were his feet. For the rest, he was completely clean. I must be made clean with that other washing of which you said: "I have a baptism with which I must be baptized."

Origen, 3rd C.

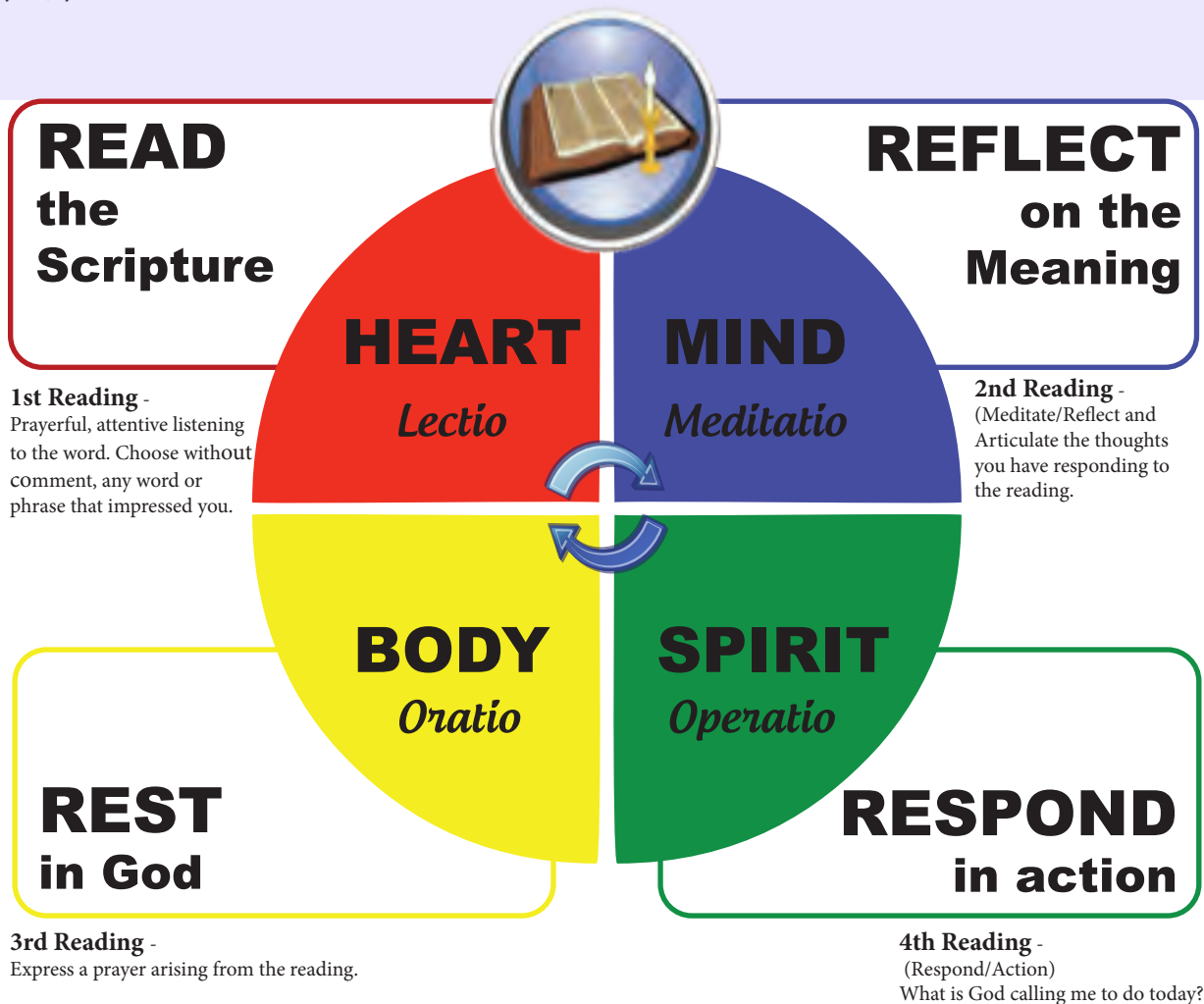


HOLY THURSDAY, APR 1

Jn 13:1-15

Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end. The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well." Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all." For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean."

So when he had washed their feet and put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."



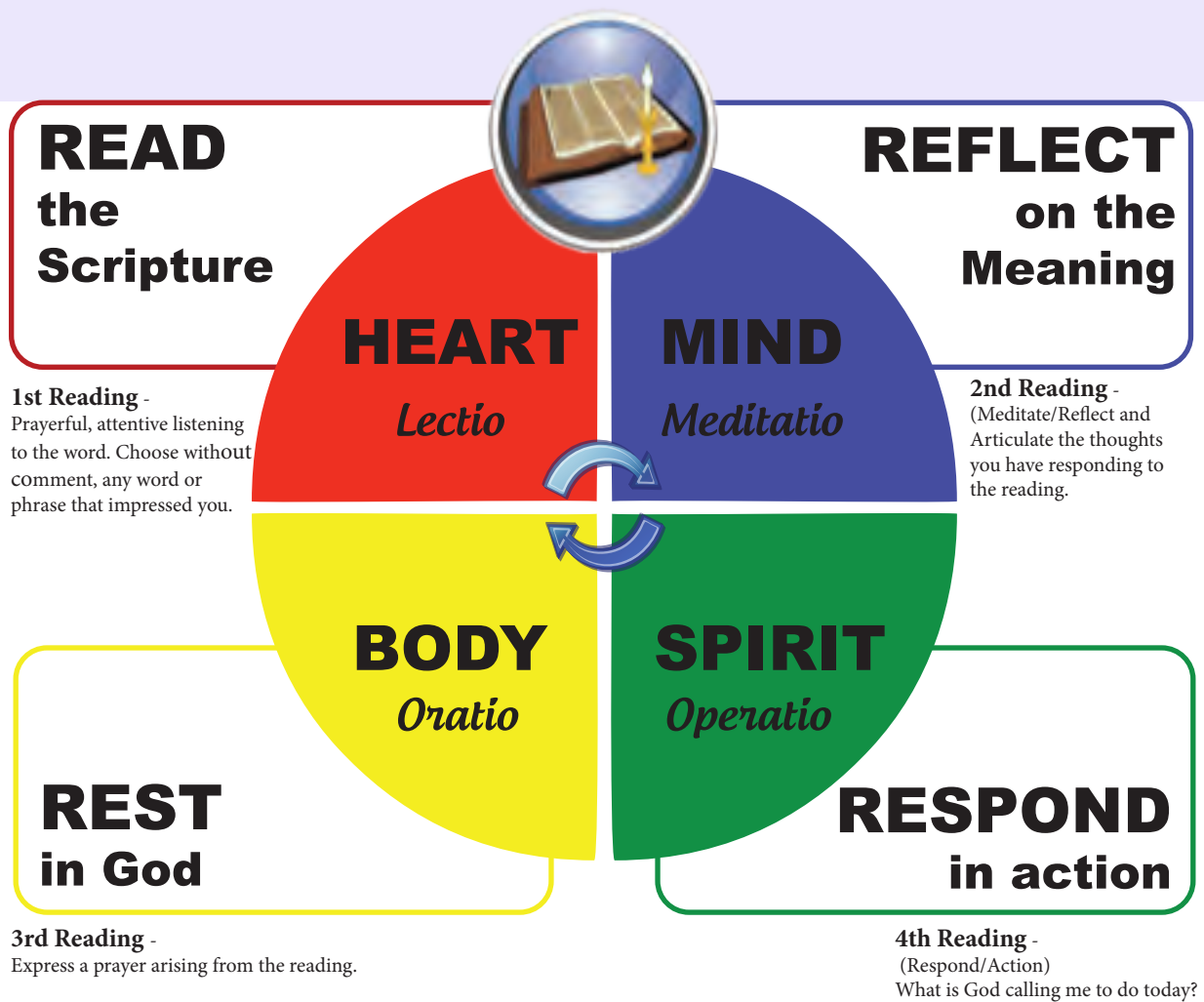


WE proclaim your death, Lord.
We sing to you, O Christ, for your
glorious resurrection.
We have been judged worthy to approach this mystical,
ineffable banquet.
Let us share, joyfully,
in the spiritual gifts here before us;
let us sing with the angels
the canticle of victory. Alleluia.
The Lord, who abides in the Father's bosom,
is on the cross as well, today;
Of his own will,
he chose to be buried like a mortal man;
but on the third day, he rose again
and gave us the gift of his great mercy.

Early Christian Prayer

GOOD FRIDAY, APR 2

PASSION OF CHRIST FROM THE GOSPEL OF JOHN





HOLY SATURDAY

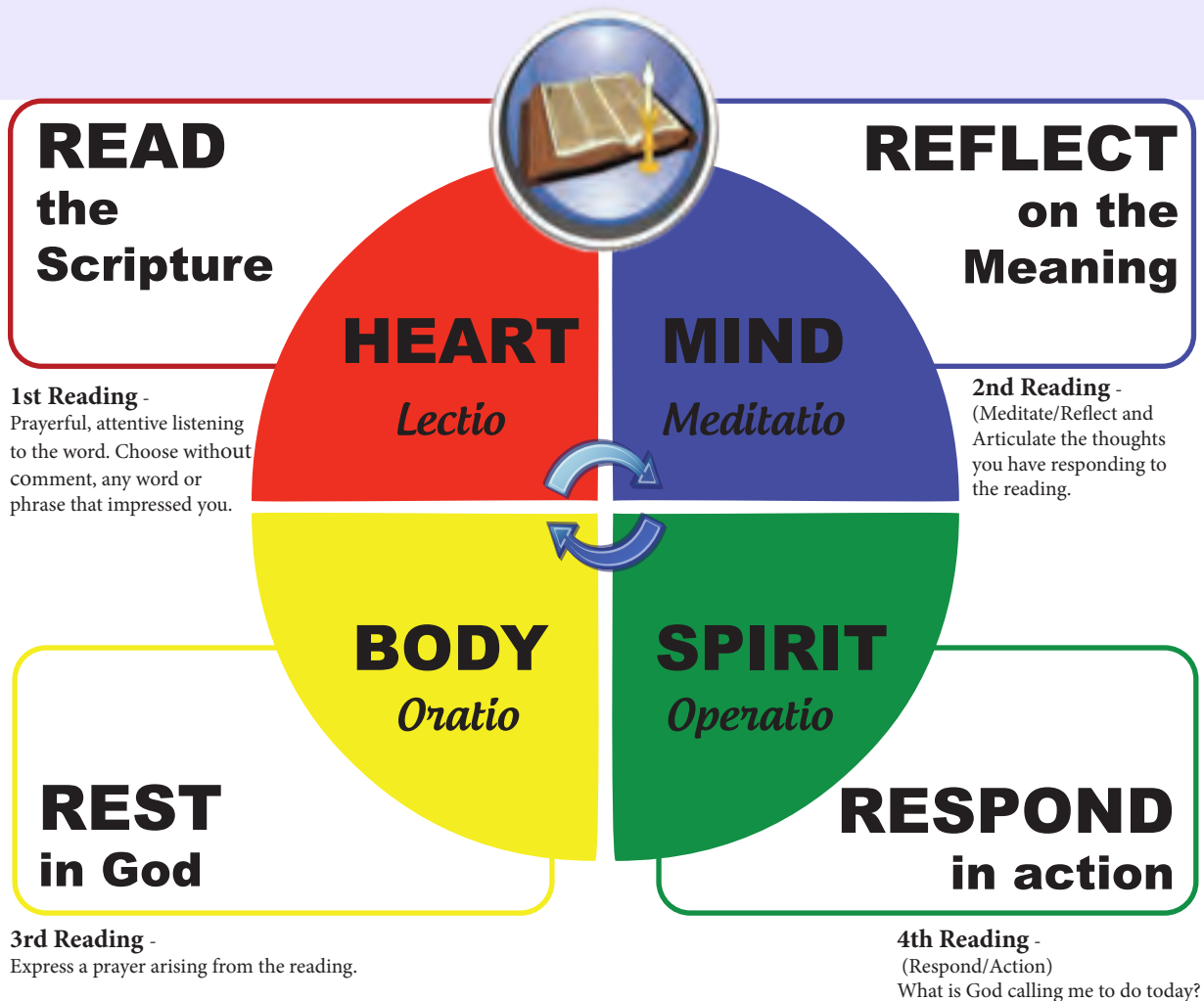
In silence we await

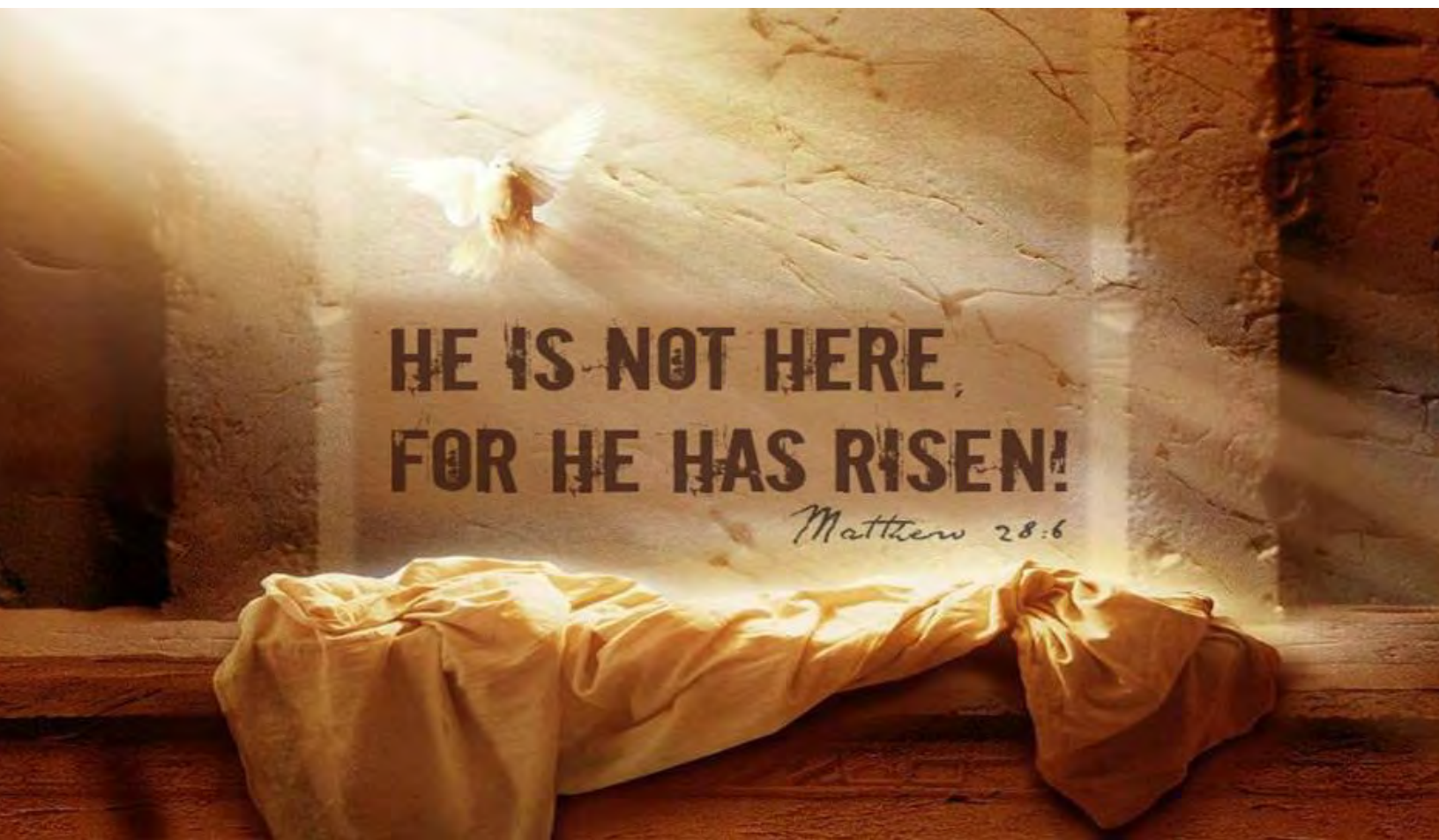
Christ, thou didst sleep a life-giving sleep in the grave,
and didst awtaken humankind from the heavy sleep of sin.
Holy Saturday Orthodox Liturgy

SATURDAY, APR 3, EASTER VIGIL MASS

Mark 16:1-7

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint him. Very early when the sun had risen, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back; it was very large. On entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were utterly amazed. He said to them, "Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.'"





FLAME, which is a figure for the soul, is also a figure for the living God; for “God is light and in him there is no darkness.” As the flame radiates light so God radiates truth, and the soul by receiving truth is united with God, as our eyes by seeing its light are united with the flame. And, as the flame radiates heat, so does God radiate the warmth of goodness; and as the hand and the cheek by perceiving the warmth become one with the flame, so whoever loves God becomes one with him in goodness. But also, just as the candle remains free and disengaged in its place, so does God abide us moved “dwelling in unapproachable light.”

Flame, emitting light, emitting heat, is an image to us of the living God. All this comes very much home to us on Holy Saturday when the Easter candle, which symbolizes Christ, is lighted. Three times, each time in a higher tone, the deacon sings “Lumen Christi.” ... At once every lamp and candle in the church is lighted from it, and the whole building is alight and aglow with the radiance and warmth of God’s presence.

Romano Guardini

SUNDAY, EASTER SUNDAY, APR 4

Jn 20:1-9

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet under-

