



the philipian

A PUBLICATION OF ST. PHILIP NERI CATHOLIC CHURCH



Visio Divina:

Piotr Stachiewicz | Our Lady Says Farewell to Christ | 1894 | National Museum in Krakó

PRAYING WITH SACRED ART

Chances are, some of us have heard the term “Lectio Divina,” meaning divine reading in Latin. It’s a traditional form of Scriptural prayer practiced in the Catholic Church. This type of prayer is popular among Bible studies, retreats, and personal prayer routines. A lesser known practice is just as powerful and accessible: Visio Divina. Its roots run deep in Church history – inspired by stained glass windows and iconography.

In lectio divina, the person prays with text. Similarly, in visio divina, the person prays with an image of sacred art. This form of prayer is special in the same way lectio divina is special. It relies on the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide the person in prayer. It is a beautiful collaboration between the person praying, the artist, and God. Many of us do a less formal version of visio divina even when admiring the artwork in churches. Artwork, whether it be sculptures, paintings, stained

glass, or architecture, when designed for the glory of God, will naturally lift our minds and hearts to heaven. Visio divina works with this natural inclination by adding some structure to help guide our wandering minds and gives name to a practice that has been around for ages.

Lectio divina and visio divina start the same way: with **an invocation of the Holy Spirit**. Here, we ask God’s Spirit to fall upon us, enter our minds, and guide our time in prayer. For the next step in lectio divina, we read and re-read the sacred Scripture to pick out words or verses that stand out to us. In visio divina, we carefully look at the artwork to find specific elements that are beautiful or intriguing to us. This step in visio divina is all about **what we notice** while looking at the image.

The next step tends to flow naturally. This is where we **meditate on the image** and the elements we noticed

from earlier. In this part we might connect the image to our own lives or try to interpret symbols in the artwork. Noticing what the artist has placed emphasis on and asking “Why did he do it this way?” can be a part of this step as well. It is also important to recognize the emotions or memories the artwork brings up; this may be the Holy Spirit’s promptings.

Next, we **enter into dialogue with God** – engaging in a conversation with Him about the artwork. Beginning by thanking God for the beautiful piece and asking for deeper understanding is a good place to start. We can ask Him if there was something we overlooked that He wanted us to see. Or maybe God wants to show us how an element in the artwork is a symbol for something in our own lives. Here, it is good to notice what God is teaching through the image and the time in prayer.

Continued on the back cover...

A Message From Father Fabio

Living According to God's Will

Forming a Conscience and Moral Code

As Christians, it is important that we recognize the difference between right and wrong – both morally and ethically. Sometimes, though, this line can become blurred.

Many situations we encounter in our lives can leave us internally conflicted and unsure of how to move forward in accordance with God's will. How do we work through these moral puzzles? One way is to develop a solid Christian conscience.

A moral conscience exists in the heart of every one of us. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking. Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed" (1777,1778).

Think of your conscience as the "angelic" version of yourself sitting on your shoulder, giving you sound advice.

While we are all blessed with a conscience, we have a responsibility to develop this conscience. Parents play an important role in developing their children's consciences. As the primary educators of their children on ethical issues and the Catholic faith, parents have a responsibility to teach virtue to their children and help them to avoid fear, selfishness, and pride. As we grow older, we take on the lifelong challenge of continually forming our own consciences, and establishing a moral code that enables us to make proper judgments.

One valuable tool in forming a conscience is the practice of introspection. In contemporary society where there are so many distractions and routines, it is important to take time to look inward and truly listen to what our inner voice is telling us.

Another way to ensure we are developing a good moral code is by conforming to the mind of Christ as the ultimate example of what to do and how to behave according to God's will. In turn, when we act in loving imitation of Christ, we are certain to make practical judgments of conscience.

The next time you are faced with a moral dilemma, take some quiet time to look inward, weigh the positive and negative outcomes, and listen to the voice of your conscience. Focus on Christ's teachings as written in the Gospels. By making this a regular practice, you will find the voice of your conscience will come in louder and more clearly than you may have expected.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Fabio Refosco, C.O.





INTRODUCING THE NEW

Sacred Arts Ministry

Our church is filled with beautiful artwork. From the stained glass, to the tabernacle, and the paintings that decorate our walls – each piece points to the Creator and gives Him glory. St. Philip Neri Church has long been recognized as admirable by its community. This September, our parish will welcome the Sacred Arts Ministry to nurture and grow the appreciation we have for our church’s beauty.

This new ministry will be led by Brooke Gibbons, parishioner, curator and archivist. Gibbons has always been drawn to art, culture, and history and she is excited to minister to an already existing devotion to sacred art at St. Philip Neri.


This ministry will focus on meeting once a month to review a selected piece of art in our church. Whether it be an oil painting that hangs on the wall, the chalice Father uses at Mass, or the craftsmanship of the altar. Gibbons says, “We tend to think of sacred art as 2D, a flat picture on the wall, but in reality it’s all around us. For example, we have a beautiful tabernacle at our parish. Somebody designed that, and their work and creativity made it art.” Gibbons wants to take a closer look at some of the pieces that make St. Philip Neri the beautiful parish we know so well.

In her work at various museums, Gibbons frequently encounters modern art and artists. She has noticed how this modern art tends to be polarized with politics, religion, and belief systems. When she comes back to St. Philip Neri, the unity and history of Christian sacred art reminds her of God’s goodness. She “sees sacred art as a form of freedom. It goes back to when Christianity was under great persecution, and it was a way to express how God was still present in their lives.” There are many elements even beyond history and art principles that make sacred art so intricate and personal. This new sacred arts ministry aims to foster a relaxed discussion that discovers and expands upon these elements. Gibbons hopes that those interested will give the ministry a try.

Gibbons emphasizes that sacred art is for everyone. “I want to encourage anyone interested in learning about and discussing art to consider coming to a meeting and bring a friend! You can come to one class, and then come back months later. We want this to be open-ended and accepting... It’s not limited to just people in our parish, and it’s not limited to art connoisseurs. I don’t have my arts degree, and you don’t need one to contribute to this ministry.” One of the most special parts about sacred art is that it touches each person in a unique way.

The monthly meetings will include time for meditation, prayer, and discussion. Gibbons hopes the fruits of this ministry will stretch beyond the monthly meetings.

“I sometimes find myself kneeling during Mass– struggling to pray. I noticed when I look at a stained-glass window, it’s easier to engage and focus on God. I want people to know that there is more than one way to pray.”

The ministry will meet on the last Thursday of each month. The first meeting is Thursday, September 28th at 7:00 pm in Church Room A. All are welcome. 

ST. PHILIP NERI WORLD HUNGER DRIVE 2ND ANNUAL MEAL PACKING EVENT - SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14



We are extremely excited about this opportunity to, once again, bring our parish family and friends together for our 2nd Annual St. Philip Neri World Hunger Drive Meal Packing Event! Living our mission to continue the ministry of Christ beyond our parish and local community, the focus of the St. Philip Neri World Hunger Drive is to help the people of Haiti and our brothers and sisters in need here in our local community.

HAITI SNAPSHOT

Ongoing corruption, political instability, resurgent gang violence, food shortages, unemployment and vulnerability to natural disasters continue to keep Haitians locked in a cycle of poverty. This is not only raising the levels of hunger, but also leading to increased levels of severe child malnutrition.

Remember the earthquake that devastated the Caribbean country in 2010? The living conditions are far worse now. Haiti is in a slow death spiral. When President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in July 2021, chaos ensued. Now, 2 years later, there is still no presidential successor, the national government has effectively ceased to function, the power grid is down, and armed gangs rule the streets of the capital, Port-au-Prince. What makes the situation worse than it was after the earthquake is that humanitarian groups can't respond. It's simply too dangerous. In July, the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince ordered its nonessential personnel to return to the United States. The State Department has issued a Level 4 advisory cautioning American not to travel there, and humanitarian groups and efforts have been severely impacted.

So - what can our parish do?

We are continuing our partnership with the St. Matthew World Hunger Drive Ministry to ship the meals we pack to Haiti where they will be distributed by the Missionaries of the Poor. Last year, our goal was to pack 150,000 meals, and we packed over 157,000 meals. This year, we've increased our goal to 200,000 meals.

How do we do this?

On October 14th, we'll hold our 2nd Annual Meal Packing Event in the Parish Center. We'll be packing meals over 3, two-hour shifts. We'll need 200 volunteers per shift. Each shift will pack 67,000 meals. The Meal Packing event is a great way for individuals, families, and groups of all ages to work together, have fun and fulfill our calling to serve our brothers and sisters in need, locally and around the world. Children aged 5 and up can participate. There are a variety of jobs throughout the meal packing assembly line that can accommodate young children and people with special needs. And, we'll have a DJ playing classic rock to keep the mood light and the assembly lines moving! You really won't want to miss this opportunity to get together with your family and friends and have some fun serving others. Last year, volunteer spaces got snapped up like Taylor Swift tickets weeks beforehand. Sign-ups will begin the weekend of September 23/24 online and in the gathering space. 🇺🇸

SCAN ME



HERE ARE THE DETAILS:

WHEN: Saturday, October 14, 2023
WHERE: St. Philip Neri Parish Center
SHIFTS: 8:00 am to 10:00 am
10:30 am to 12:30 pm
1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

This year we are asking for monetary donations to cover the \$40,000 cost for the 200,000 meals that we will be packing. Thanks to 2 parishioners, we are off to a great start with \$3,500 donated.

Consider becoming a Box Angel and sponsor a box of packed meals for a monetary donation of \$40.00. \$100 will feed one child for a year. All donations will be gratefully accepted.

HOW TO DONATE:

To make a one-time online donation in support of the World Hunger Drive:

- Log into Vanco (eservicepayments.com) and select World Hunger Drive
- Scan the QR code on the previous page
- If donating by check, please make checks payable to St. Philip Neri Catholic Church and notate World Hunger Drive in the memo and drop in the collection basket or at the parish office.
- Cash, checks and credit card donations will be accepted after all Masses the weekend of September 23rd & 24th at the World Hunger Drive table in the gathering space.

By the way, in the spirit of paying it forward, St Mary Magdalene in Greenville, SC was inspired by our World Hunger Drive Ministry and recently held their first meal packing event following what we did.



St. Philip Neri
WORLD HUNGER DRIVE
Feeding the body, mind & spirit

Sponsored by angels. Packed with love.

WE LOVE YOU!
GOD BLESS!
NOU RENMEN OU!

THE SMITH FAMILY





This is a story about two saints. At a major turning point in the one's vocation, the other saint - his confessor and spiritual counselor - did not agree with his intentions and would not condone his decision to leave the hospital where he worked and to begin a new apostolate to care for the infirm. It goes to show that even saints don't always think the same way and that even saints can learn from one another.

Giovanni Battista Tiepolo,
The Virgin Appearing to St Philip Neri, 1740,
Museo Diocesano, Camerino

Camillus de Lellis and Philip Neri

: A DISPUTE AMONG SAINTS

St. Camillus de Lellis was born in the little village of Buccianico in the modern-day region of Abruzzo. Situated on a hilltop in the Italian countryside, it perhaps calls to mind an atmosphere similar to that of another town that fostered saints: Assisi. From the beginning, Camillus was out of the ordinary. His mother was nearly 60 when he was born in 1550. He was a little miracle, but he didn't stay little. If basketball had been a sport during his youth, Camillus would have been a desirable player, eventually growing to a height of 6'6".

With his father, he fought against the Turks. Soon, however, his mobility was hindered when he developed a "painful and repulsive disease in his leg," as Butler's *Lives of the Saints* describes it. Because of this, he retired to the San Giacomo Hospital in Rome which was intended for incurables. Here he was both patient and servant, but he was released after nine months, after which he returned to the Turkish war.

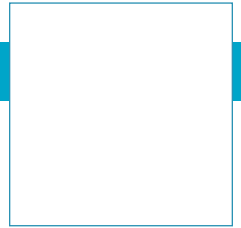
St. Philip Neri was a much older man. Born in 1515, he worked as a tutor and became preoccupied with showing charity to the poor. Like Camillus, he was destined to establish a new religious order. He pursued a vocation to the priesthood, being ordained in 1551, the year after Camillus's birth. As Divine Providence destined, their paths to Heaven would cross in this life, but would they also conflict?

Through a severe gambling addiction, Camillus lost everything he had. After hitting rock bottom, he shook himself from his spiritual stupor and reserved himself to join the Franciscans. After a deep conversion, he attempted to join the Capuchins, but he could not profess vows on account of his diseased leg. So he returned to San Giacomo Hospital where he emptied himself into the work of serving the sick and showing them the love of Jesus Christ. But his peers seemed lackluster, even deficient, in their care for the patients. Camillus now felt drawn to gather a small band of men who would dedicate themselves to serving the infirm.

During this same period of his life, Camillus developed a bond with Philip Neri. He sought a spiritual director and discovered this holy priest who, like himself, had a passion for helping those who suffered either in body or soul or both.

For years, Camillus went to Philip at least once a week for Confession and spiritual direction. Philip approved of the younger man's desire to become a priest. However, Camillus also decided to leave San Giacomo Hospital and begin his own society of servants, a move Philip advised against. His confessor believed it was a foolhardy decision that would end in failure. But Camillus discerned otherwise (that it was, in fact, the Will of God) and, in the fruitful years to come, the little society grew into the Ministers of the Sick, which was declared an official religious order by the pope in 1591.

In the end, Camillus established the Ministers of the Sick, and Philip, the Oratorians. They were founders, both attuned to the silent voice of God in the interior life and bringing about terrific spiritual renewal through the active life. They were both saints! But what is the moral of the story, of this conflict between saints? There are a few takeaways: First, we must listen to the Will of God instilled in us by the movement of the Holy Spirit and the inclinations of a well-formed conscience. Camillus listened to this inner voice and had faith. To be sure, Philip also had faith in God, but perhaps he didn't have faith in Camillus as God's instrument who would start a new order. In addition to listening to God's Will for our own life, we should be open to how He works in others' lives. There are as many different flavors of saints as there are human beings conceived in God's image. Second, no matter how much worldly experience one has, this does not equal sanctity. No matter a person's background or age, they have the capacity for sanctity in every moment of their life. Camillus was much younger than Philip, but age had no bearing on how God molded him. And third, everyone is at a different stage in their spiritual journey regardless of age or experience in the world. Even saints aren't on a level playing field; they're at different stages. God invites all of us, no matter where we're at, to grow in a relationship with Him and help others do the same. Although they took slightly different avenues, both Philip and Camillus did exactly this. 🙏



St. Philip Neri

CATHOLIC CHURCH

292 Munn Road East
Fort Mill, SC 29715

803.548.7282
saintphilipneri.org

Visio Divina:

PRAYING WITH SACRED ART *Continued*

The final step is to **contemplate**. Contemplation goes deeper than a conversation with God. It is a silent expression of love shared between you and The Father. It is a complete gift from the Holy Spirit and when God seals in all the graces received from prayer. All we need to do is bask in His glory and rest in His presence. It's where saints are made.

If we are to practice visio divina with the painting *Our Lady Says Farewell to Christ*, by Piotr Stachiewicz, the five steps might look like this:

1. An invocation of the Holy Spirit
Lord, thank you for giving me the time to pray with your sacred art today. I ask that you would send your Holy Spirit upon me to influence my thoughts, and guide my mind during this prayer. Let me be sensitive to your promptings and attentive to your voice.

2 & 3. What we notice and meditate on

I am immediately drawn to the intimacy between Jesus and Our Lady: his head on her heart, her fingers through his hair, the Son kissing the Mother's hand so tenderly. I imagine this is the moment Jesus sets out to begin his public ministry. Mary and Jesus know that he will begin his Passion soon, and so this moment is filled with deep emotions: love, affliction, hope, and anticipation. The colors in this painting are also striking. Everything is muted and misty – adding to the quiet and heavy atmosphere.

4. Enter into dialogue with God
Jesus, what were you thinking of while you kissed your Mother's hand? I am reminded of her at the foot of your Crucifixion and imagine her lips brushing your feet – returning your tender kiss. Where is your halo, Lord?

I see the bright thin line around Mary, and can even see a faint halo around Joseph's head in the doorway. But why are you left without? I am then led to notice the way Christ's hair is braided behind His ears. It vaguely resembles the crown of thorns. Jesus, you are crowned in humility on the Cross and in this painting.

5. Contemplate

These meditations keep bringing me to the Crucifixion. I place myself on the bottom step at Jesus and Mary's feet and think of my suffering Savior and Mother at Calvary. I hear them whisper to each other, and I admire the love between them as they share a tender farewell. †