

Chapter 1
The Dignity of the Human Person
[*The Good Samaritan* by Vincent van Gogh]

This assignment will confront students with what it means to “love others as you love yourself.” Through a lectio divina with Luke 10:25-37 you will facilitate an encounter with the God who calls to them just as Jesus called the “expert of the law” in the story told by St. Luke. This will, ideally, lead to a confrontation for each student with the challenging question that arises in all of our hearts: “But who is my neighbor?”

First, read the passage from Luke 10:25-37, out loud and slowly. Then, share this reflection in your own words:

We all know that Jesus commanded us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. But this can be hard sometimes. It’s very easy to make excuses when we see someone in need, whether it’s a stranger or a friend, especially when we feel like it will inconvenience us or if we were in the middle of something else. But Jesus is very firm. He tells a parable where a man goes very far out of his way to help someone who is from a different country and religion than him, in a very dangerous situation, because it is the right thing to do. As you listen to the passage again, think about someone in your life who is really in need, or someone you have encountered in the past. Have you helped them like the Good Samaritan would? Or think about someone you know who is very good and goes out of their way to care for others. Have you lived up to that ideal? How do you feel when you see them caring for others? Does it inspire you? How can you follow Jesus more closely?

After this reflection, hand out the Visio Divina Script. Read through it with your students. Then read the biblical passage one more time. Finally, display the painting [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Van_Gogh_-_Der_barmherzige_Samariter.jpeg] or use the image in your book. Have the students write their reflections to the visio divina exercise on a separate sheet of paper.

Visio Divina Script

1. *Visio*. This Latin word means “beholding,” “vision,” or “gaze.” Look at the painting in detail. Observe different moments, aspects, colors, and characters in the painting. Make notes about what stands out to you.
2. *Meditatio*. This word means, of course, “meditation” or “reflection.” What stood out to you? Think about this. Does it connect to your life? Could it inspire you to change something in your life or deepen some aspect of your life? Does your reflection raise up with it any questions or remembrances in your mind?
3. *Oratio*. This word means “prayer.” It could also be thought of as your personal *response* to what God has said to you in your time of reflection. Speak with God about what has come up for you – the questions, challenges, and memories. Ask him for help. Pray for those in your life who have come to mind during this time. Thank God for what he has blessed you with and what he might bless you with in future.
4. *Contemplatio*. This word means “contemplation.” Spend some time in the presence of God. Turn over your reflection in your mind again. Does anything jump out at you a second time? Remind yourself of what you prayed for and ask God to stay with you. What do you hear from God? Is he saying anything to you? Breathe deeply. Rest in God’s presence.
5. *Actio*. This word means “action.” This is the step in the process that leads to *conversion*—turning our lives in a new direction, which is what happens when we encounter God. Do you want to be closer to God? How? Do you want to be closer to those around you? How? In other words, now that you’ve had this prayer experience, what are you going to do? Has anything risen up in your heart that could help you live a better or different life? Plan out some steps to make that happen.