

DANTE, MERCY & THE BEAUTY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

"[The *Commedia*] is an invitation to rediscover the lost or obscured meaning of our human path to hope to see again the glowing horizon on which the dignity of the human person shines in its fullness."
~ Pope Francis

The journey with Dante from Lent to Easter begins on Ash Wednesday (February 10, 2016) and concludes on Divine Mercy Sunday (April 3, 2016). See the reverse side of this sheet for a suggested reading schedule. Each pilgrim is encouraged to keep a reading journal in which he/she writes one word for each canto after reading, whether that word comes from the canto itself or is a word that the pilgrim him/herself offers. Of course, further journaling may take place, but committing to one word journal entries per canto ensures the reasonableness and manageability of the whole journey.

Alongside this journey of spiritual reading, pilgrims are encouraged to meet together in readings group three times: once in the middle of Lent (around the end of *Inferno*), once during Holy Week (March 21-March 26), and once during Easter (preferably after April 3). This guide is intended to assist pilgrims in their reading group discussions.

Reading Group Meeting 1: *Inferno*

Mid-Lent (early March)

Main Question: What have I learned about myself in reading this?

- The farther Dante journeys into the *Inferno*, the colder and narrower it becomes. What he sees is that complicity with evil and being locked into oneself are directly proportional.
 - Reflect on the landscape of the *Inferno* as a whole.
 - Focus on one moment of the *Inferno* and discuss the relationship of sin to the landscape.
- What is sin? What is hell?
- Why are the damned in hell?
- Did Dante believe in hell?
- Can the *Inferno* help me to pray? How?

Reading Group Meeting 2: *Purgatorio*

Holy Week (March 21-26)

Main Question: What have I learned about myself in reading this?

- In the *Purgatorio*, the landscape narrows the closer Dante moves towards the peak. What do you make of this, especially in relation to the narrowing landscape of the *Inferno*?
- Dante enters purgatory on Easter morning. What is that about? Use this as an opportunity to reflect on liturgical time and how time functions in the *Commedia*.
- Given that the forgiveness of sins is a prerequisite for entry into purgatory, how do we account for the cleansing of vices and the development of virtue?
- Are the penitents free? How and/or how not?
- Dante's own name appears only once in the entire *Commedia: Purgatorio* 30:55. What is the significance of this?
- Why is Beatrice angry with Dante?

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Reading Group Meeting 3: *Paradiso*

Easter (after April 3)

Main Question: What have I learned about myself in reading this?

- During Dante’s pilgrimage three main guides accompany him: Virgil, Beatrice, and Bernard.
 - Why does he need them?
 - What do we learn about Dante, about pilgrimage, and about ourselves with or from the guides?
- What is the importance of Mary in Dante’s journey?
- The Empyrean is heaven itself and is constituted by God alone (Dante refers to this as Light-Love-Joy, see *Paradiso* 30:40-42). Everything Dante sees in the *Paradiso* up to this point is given to him so that he may prepare to abide in the Empyrean, beyond space and time.
 - What does it mean that the Empyrean is populated?
 - How does Dante’s journey end?
- Did Dante actually make this journey? Did we?

General Questions

Main Question: What have I learned about myself in reading this?

- What is the importance of the body in the *Commedia*?
- What is the importance of desire in the *Commedia*?
- Is it spiritually significant that the *Commedia* is narrative poetry?

Finale: At journey’s end, reflect on the series title: “Dante, Mercy & the Beauty of the Human Person”.

INFERNO

February 10 through February 26
Read two cantos per day

10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	

PURGATORIO

February 27 through March 14
Read two cantos per day

27	28	29	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14*	

PARADISO

March 15 through April 3
Read two cantos per day

15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3*				

* Read one canto on the final day of Purgatorio and Paradiso; No reading during the Easter Triduum