

Guide to *Lectio Divina*

Choose a word or phrase of the Scriptures you wish to pray. It makes no difference which text is chosen, as long as you have no set goal of “covering” a certain amount of text. The amount of text covered is in God’s hands, not yours.

Read. Turn to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the “still, small voice” of a word or phrase that somehow says, “I am for you today.” Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. In *lectio divina*, God is teaching us to listen, to seek him in silence. God does not reach out and grab us but gently invites us ever more deeply into his presence.

Ponder. Take the word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories, and ideas. Do not be afraid of distractions. Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself that, when they rise up during *lectio divina*, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

Pray. Whether you use words, ideas, or images — or all three — is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. Give to God what you have discovered during your experience of meditation. Give to God what you have found within your heart.

It is not necessary to assess the quality of your *lectio divina*, as if you were “performing” or seeking some goal. *Lectio divina* has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

Fr. Luke Dysinger

Lectio Divina: 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Sunday, October 11, 2020

A universal invitation to the banquet of the Realm

To welcome salvation with the right disposition

Matthew 22:1-14

1. Opening prayer

Spirit of truth, sent by Jesus to guide us to the whole truth, enlighten our minds so that we may understand the Scriptures. You, who overshadowed Mary and made her fruitful ground where the Word of God could germinate, purify our hearts from all obstacles to the Word. Help us to learn like her to listen with good and pure hearts to the Word that God speaks to us in life and in Scripture, so that we may observe the Word and produce good fruit through our perseverance.

2. Reading

a) The context:

The meaning of the parable is quite clear when we read it in its context. It comes straight after another parable on the Realm (21:33-43) and is part of an argument between Jesus and the high priests and the Pharisees on His mission and authority (see 21:23-46).

In the preceding parable on the vineyard, Jesus sums up the history of salvation. God enveloped Israel with special care and hoped that such care would have produced fruit in the shape of a life of faithfulness and justice. From time to time God sent prophets to remind the people of the fruit that God expected, but their mission always met with Israel's rejection. Finally, God sent His own Son, but they killed Him. At this point Jesus says that because Israel continued to reject the Realm, the Realm would therefore pass on to another people, that is, the pagans (21:43). This pronouncement gives us the key to the reading of our parable, which really repeats the message of the previous parable using a different image and with different nuances.

We must affirm clearly that both parables can in no way justify the idea that God rejected Israel in favor of the Church. Suffice it to read Romans 9-11 to be convinced of the contrary. Jesus says hard things, prophetic things, to draw His people to repentance and for them to accept Him. Besides, the pagans too, the newly invited ones, run the risk of being thrown out if they do not wear the wedding garment.

b) The text:

Jesus began to speak to them in parables once again. 'The kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next he sent some more servants with the words, "Tell those who have been invited: Look, my banquet is all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered. Everything is ready. Come to the wedding." But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He dispatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the main crossroads and invite everyone you can find to come to the wedding."



So these servants went out onto the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests. When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth." For many are invited but not all are chosen.'

3. A moment of prayerful silence

so that the Word of God may enter into us and enlighten our life.

4. Some questions

to help us in our personal reflection.

- a) Whom do the invited guests who refuse the invitation represent?
- b) Whom do the newly invited guests found in the street represent?
- c) Whom does the person without the wedding garment represent?
- d) Are there "urgent matters" in my life that prevent me from accepting God's invitation?
- e) What is the wedding garment God wants me to wear for me to take part at the wedding banquet of the Realm of God?

5. A key to the reading

for those who wish to go deeper into the text.

● The banquet of the Realm

The prophets often proclaimed the benefits of salvation and especially those of the eschatological times through the image of a banquet. The first reading of this Sunday (Isa 25:6-10a) is an example. Like Jesus, Isaiah too speaks of a banquet prepared by God for all peoples. However, the people of Israel and especially the city of Jerusalem remain at the center of God's plan as mediators of the salvation offered by God for all. In the New Testament, however, even though there is an admission that "salvation comes from the Jews" (Jn 4:22), the only mediator of salvation is Jesus, who continues to exercise His mediation through the community of His disciples, the Church.

● The wedding garment

It is an insult to the one who has sent the invitation to arrive at the feast wearing ordinary working clothes. It is a sign of not giving proper consideration for the occasion to which one is invited. This image, used in the parable on the Realm, wants to convey the idea that one cannot enter the Realm without preparation, and the only preparation is conversion. In fact, to change garment in biblical terms means to change style of life or to be converted (see for instance Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:20-24).

● "Many are called but few are chosen"

This expression is a semitism. In the absence of comparisons, biblical Hebrew uses expressions that are based on drastic opposites. Hence this expression says nothing on the numerical relationship between those called into the Church and the elect to eternal life. However, it is also true that the parable makes a distinction between the call to salvation, election and final perseverance. The generosity of the ruler is huge, but we must be serious about the demands of the Realm. The expression is a pressing appeal not to be satisfied with just formal membership among the people of God. We cannot take salvation for granted. Here Jesus follows closely the teaching of the prophets. Recall Jer 7:1-15 and Hos 6:1-6.

6. Psalm 47

The Lord is Ruler of Israel and the world

Clap your hands, all peoples!
Shout to God with loud songs of joy!
For the Lord, the Most High, is terrible,
a great king over all the earth.

He subdued peoples under us,
and nations under our feet.
He chose our heritage for us,
the pride of Jacob whom He loves.
God has gone up with a shout,
the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.

Sing praises to God, sing praises!
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
For God is the king of all the earth;
sing praises with a psalm!
God reigns over the nations;
God sits on His holy throne.

The princes of the peoples
gather as the people of the God of Abraham.
For the shields of the earth belong to God;
He is highly exalted!

7. Closing prayer

God, Lord of the world and Ruler of all peoples, from the beginning You have prepared a banquet for Your children and You wish to gather us around Your table to share in Your own life. We thank You for having called us into Your Church through Jesus Your Son. May Your Spirit make us ever attentive and ready to continue to accept Your invitation and may we, through the same Spirit, put on the new person, created according to God in justice and in true holiness, in the image of Christ, so that we may enter the banquet of Your Realm together with a multitude of brothers and sisters. Use us, if You so wish, to continue to call others to the universal banquet of Your Realm.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time.

11OCT₂₀₂₀ - TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Seek wisdom's light

If we learned nothing else this year, it's that circumstances change. Societies come together and shatter apart. Wellness comes and goes. Markets rise and fall. War and peace exchange places. We climb up and down the ladder of success. If we're wise, we learn what Saint Paul observed: Spiritual flexibility beats insisting and resisting. Today the Rosary's Luminous Mysteries guide us to wisdom: Partner with the Holy Spirit, trust grace to supply what's needed, seek the Kingdom's paradox, recognize Jesus in the faces of the poor, and know that God is present at every table.

Today's readings:

Isaiah 25:6-10a; Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20; Matthew = 22:1-14 ([142](#)).

"I know how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance."

12OCT₂₀₂₀

The past calls us to a more just future

Indigenous Peoples' Day is celebrated in many communities to honor Native Americans and their histories and cultures. Today is also a U.S. federal holiday, Columbus Day. Many want the former to replace the latter, while others are dismayed by the growing trend. We can acknowledge the complicity of colonial church leaders in the exploitation and abuse of native peoples (though there were notable exceptions like Bartolomé de las Casas). At the same time, we can work to right those wrongs in the present and forge a more just future together, building the reign of God here and now.

Today's readings:

Galatians 4:22-24, 26-27, 31—5:1; Luke 11:29-32 ([467](#)).

"Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation."

13OCT₂₀₂₀

Ponder the mystery

For centuries the Catholic Church has honored Mary in both May and October. So perhaps it wasn't surprising that Our Lady of Fatima reportedly began to appear once a month to three children in Portugal in 1917—beginning on May 13 and ending on this day, October 13. On the last day, with more than 70,000 people gathered in anticipation, many reported seeing an unusual heavenly phenomenon that has been called the "dance of the sun." Ponder today what Pope John Paul II identified as Fatima's significance: "conversion and repentance, the nucleus of the message of the gospel."

Today's readings:

Galatians 5:1-6; Luke 11:37-41 ([468](#)).

"Through the Spirit, by faith, we await the hope of righteousness."

14OCT₂₀₂₀ - MEMORIAL OF CALLISTUS I, POPE, MARTYR

Differences of opinion are nothing new

Callistus I was elected pope by the clergy and laity of Rome in 217. The election results did not sit well with that election's runner-up, Hippolytus. The two men disagreed on church doctrine and Hippolytus accused Callistus of leniency in enforcing church rules. Callistus' tolerance imitated Jesus' compassion but Hippolytus did not see it that way. He became the first anti-pope in church history, a schism that lasted 18 years. Eventually, Hippolytus reconciled with the church but not before Callistus I was martyred in a local Roman disturbance in 222. This piece of history is a reminder that differences will occur among church leaders, but the promised Holy Spirit remains with us. Pray for peaceful resolution of differences, in church and in society.

Today's readings:

Galatians 5:18-25; Luke 11:42-46 ([469](#)).

“If you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”

15OCT2020 - MEMORIAL OF TERESA OF JESUS, VIRGIN, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Seek some mystic reform

Today we honor one of the great women of the church, Saint Teresa of Ávila, also known as Teresa of Jesus. Teresa’s life seemed rather routine on the surface—she was a cloistered nun in the 1500s. But as her mystical encounters with Jesus emerged, along with her desire for a simpler, less “worldly” way of being, she began to write about the spiritual life and advocated for reform of her religious order, against strong opposition. Declared a doctor of the church in 1970, Teresa’s reforms and enduring spiritual insights still carry weight. What reform, small or large, can you work toward today that can help bring about peace and spiritual growth for yourself and others?

Today's readings:

Ephesians 1:1-10; Luke 11:47-54 ([470](#)).

“Woe to you, scholars of the law! You have taken away the key of knowledge.”

16OCT2020 - MEMORIAL OF MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE, VIRGIN

Put your heart into it

From stained glass windows to tattoos, the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been an enduring, powerful symbol to many people from all walks of life. In the 17th century, particular attention to the heart of Jesus began to be promoted. Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, a French Visitation nun, had a special tenderness for Jesus’ Sacred Heart and often shared her prayers and visions of it. In the heart of Jesus—imaged as pierced with thorns, flames, and a cross atop—she experienced the burning love of Christ for all people and the trust that Jesus held all of our joys and suffering in his heart. With Margaret Mary, what joys and sufferings might we entrust to the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

Today's readings:

Ephesians 1:11-14; Luke 12:1-7 ([471](#)).

“In Christ we were . . . chosen.”

17OCT2020 - MEMORIAL OF IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, BISHOP, MARTYR

Journey with courage

Map the distance between Antioch, Syria, and Rome: 3,716 kilometers, 39 hours by car—without traffic. Now imagine traveling that distance in chains around the year 107, with hungry lions awaiting your arrival. Even with all that, Ignatius of Antioch, approaching a brutal martyrdom, writes from the road to the Ephesians: “I do not issue orders to you, as if I were some great person. For though I am bound for His name, I am not yet perfect in Jesus Christ.” His focus is on the privilege of dying for God’s glory: “Being blessed in the greatness and fullness of God,” he sends readers “abundant happiness through Jesus Christ, and His undefiled joy.” Call on Ignatius when you face the really frightful realities life confronts us with at times.

Today's readings:

Ephesians 1:15-23; Luke 12:8-12 ([472](#)).

“I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints.”