

# 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: Ordinary Time

Sunday, November 8, 2020

*The parable of the ten virgins Preparing for the sudden coming of God in our life Matthew 25:1-13*

## 1. Opening prayer

Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that you read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, you helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of your sentence and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection. Create in us silence so that we may listen to your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples from Emmaus, may experience the force of your resurrection and witness to others that you are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of you, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed to us the Father and sent us your Spirit. Amen.

## 2. Reading

### a) A key to the reading:

Our meditation is on the parable of the ten virgins. In His parables, Jesus loves to make use of well-known facts in the life of the people as a means of comparison in order to clarify some unknown aspect of the Realm of God. In the parable of the ten virgins, He builds a story around the different attitudes of the girls who accompany the bridegroom on the feast day of his wedding. Jesus uses this fact, which is well known to all, in order to shed light on the event of the sudden coming of the Realm of God in people's lives. Generally, Jesus does not explain His parables, but says: "Let him who has ears to hear, understand!" Or "So it is. You have heard! Now try to understand." He provokes people, so that known facts of daily life might help them discover God's promptings in their lives. He involves His listeners in the discovery of the meaning of the parable. The experience that each person has of the facts of life as told in the parable, contributes to the discovery of the meaning of Jesus' parable. This shows that Jesus trusted in people's ability to understand. They become co-owners of the meaning. At the end of the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus says "Watch, therefore, because you do not know the day or the hour". This final warning serves as a key to the reading. It shows the direction of Jesus' thinking. In this reading we should seek to discover the central point of this parable that Jesus uses as a comparison for the Realm of God.

### b) A division of the text to help with the reading:

Mt 25:1-4: The different attitudes of the girls who accompany the bridegroom: five wise and five foolish. Mt 25:5-6: The delay in the coming of the bridegroom and his sudden arrival in the night. Mt 25:7-9: The different attitudes of the wise and the foolish. Mt 25:10-12: The different outcome for the wise and the foolish. Mt 25:13: The conclusion of the parable.

### c) Text:

1-4: Then the kingdom of Heaven will be like this: ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were sensible: the foolish ones, though they took their lamps, took no oil with them, whereas the sensible ones took flasks of oil as well as their lamps. 5-6: The bridegroom was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there was a cry, "Look! The bridegroom! Go out and meet him." 7-9: Then all those virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps, and the foolish ones said to the sensible ones, "Give us some of your oil: our lamps are going out." But they replied, "There may not be enough for us and for you; you had better go to those who sell it and buy some for yourselves." 10-12: They had gone off to buy it when the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready

went in with him to the wedding hall and the door was closed. The other attendants arrived later. "Lord, Lord," they said, "open the door for us." But he replied, "In truth I tell you, I do not know you."13: So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour.

### **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) What did you like best in the parable and what caught your attention? Why?
- b) What is the context of people's daily life that Jesus stresses in this parable?
- c) From the start, Jesus distinguishes between "wise" and "foolish". What is the meaning of wisdom and of foolishness?
- d) How can we interpret the bridegroom's harsh reply: "I tell you solemnly, I do not know you"?
- e) Of what day and which hour is Jesus speaking at the end of the parable?

### **5. A key to the reading**

For those who wish to go deeper into the text.

#### **• The context within which Matthew records Jesus' words**

Matthew's Gospel has two kinds of parables. Those that help in the understanding of the Realm of God as present in Jesus' activities, and those that help us prepare for the future coming of the Realm. The first are more frequent in the early apostolic life of Jesus. The latter are more frequent in the second half when it is clear that Jesus will be persecuted, apprehended, and killed by the civil and religious authorities. In other words, both dimensions of the Realm are to be found in the parables: 1) the Realm already present, here and now, hidden in the daily events of life and which may be discovered and appreciated by us, and 2) the future Realm still to come and for which each one of us must prepare starting now. The tension between the already and the not yet pervades the life of the Christian. Christmas is at once a celebration of the Realm already present and the anticipation of the Realm that is still to come.

#### **• A commentary on Jesus' words as recorded in Matthew**

Matthew 25:1-4: The different attitudes of the girls who accompany the bridegroom: five wise and five foolish. Jesus begins the parable with the words: "The kingdom of heaven will be like this..." This means that the parable of the ten virgins is about the future coming of the Realm for which we must prepare starting now. In order to shed light on this dimension of the Realm, Jesus uses the well-known custom of inviting some young girls of the village to accompany the bridegroom to the wedding feast. They had to accompany the bridegroom with lighted lamps. But the lamps were small and the oil they contained was sufficient only for a limited time. That is why it was prudent for each to take with her a little oil in reserve since the journey with the bridegroom could take longer than the limited time the oil in the lamps would last. The following is what is implied in this story of the ten virgins: those who accept an assignment must prepare themselves according to the requirements of that assignment. The young girl, who accepts to be lady in waiting at a wedding must do what is required for this function. She must be far-sighted and carry the oil needed for the lamp. Those who undertake a trip of 100 kilometres on a road that has no petrol stations, and who know that, and leave with petrol for only 50 kilometres, are neither prudent nor far-sighted. People will say: "Silly, they have no brains".

Matthew 25:5-6: The delay of the bridegroom and his sudden arrival in the night. The sequence of events told by Jesus is quite normal. It is night and the bridegroom is delayed. The girls, with every good intention and without meaning to, fall asleep. They try to stay awake because the bridegroom might come at any moment. Suddenly a cry goes up! "The bridegroom is coming!" It is the signal they were all awaiting. It is at this critical moment that a person's values are revealed. The things that happen to us suddenly, independent of our will, show whether we are far-sighted or foolish.

Matthew 25:7-9: The different attitudes of the wise and the foolish. When they awake, the girls begin to prepare the lamps they need to make light on the road. It was time to add some oil because the lamps were running low. The girls who did not bring oil with them in reserve ask to borrow some from those who had brought oil. These reply that they cannot give them any oil, because then 21 both of them would not have enough. If it was just a question of making light for the road, the wise ones could have said: walk beside us and you will be able to see where you go. But it was not a question of just making light for the road. The lamps were also a festive sign and to make light for the bridegroom on his arrival. This was the task of these ladies in waiting. Each would hold a lamp in her hand. At the critical moment, the foolish girls ask for a share. They ask that the wise share the oil with them. Often, a parable makes only one point. Sharing was a very important and fundamental practice among the people of God. But in this case, it was not a question of sharing, because had the wise ones shared their oil, they would have caused harm to the bridegroom and spoiled the wedding feast. Neither they nor the others would have fulfilled the function which they had accepted. That is why the wise meet the request of the foolish negatively and offer realistic advice: "Buy some yourselves!" However, it was already midnight and it would have been difficult to find a shop open.

Matthew 25:10-12: The different outcome for the wise and the foolish. While the foolish girls went to buy oil, the bridegroom arrived and those who were prepared went in to the wedding feast with him and the door was closed. In the parable, the foolish girls found a shop open and bought some oil. Late as they were, they come and cry: "Open the door for us!" The bridegroom (at least, it seems that it is he) answers harshly: "In truth I tell you, I do not know you."

Matthew 25:13: Conclusion: Watchfulness. The conclusion applied by Jesus Himself at the end of the story is a phrase that may be seen as the key to the whole parable: "Stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour!" God can come at any time during our lives. Everyone must be prepared. Like the young girls at the wedding feast, everyone must be prudent and show foresight and carry sufficient oil. There is a personal responsibility, even within the context of community. One cannot "borrow" good works from the community when the time comes. Everyone must stay on guard in the service of God and neighbor because you know not the time the bridegroom will arrive.

#### • **To round off:**

How can we explain the harsh phrase: "I do not know you!"? We suggest two possible answers:-- Many parables contain something strange: the father who does not scold the prodigal son, the shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep to look for the one, the Samaritan who behaves better than the priest and the Levite, etc. Usually, these strange or surprising aspects hide an important key for the discovery of the central point of the parable. In the parable of the ten virgins there are some strange things that do not usually happen: 1) There are no shops open at night, 2) The door is not usually closed at a wedding feast, 3) Normally, the bridegroom would never say: I do not know you. It is through these strange matters that the central thread of the teaching of the parable runs through. What is that? "Listen! Anyone who has ears."-- The bridegroom in the parable is Jesus Himself who arrives late at night. It is what the context of other texts in the Gospels and in the Old Testament implies. In His conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus says that she had five husbands and the one she had now, the sixth, is not her true husband. The seventh is Jesus, the real spouse (Jn 4:16-18). While the bridegroom is with His disciples they need not fast (Mk 2:19-20). From the time of the prophet Hosea, in the 8th century before Christ, there grew in

the people a hope of being able to one day come to an intimacy with God like that between bridegroom and bride (Hos 2:19-20). Isaiah says clearly: God wishes to be the husband of the people (Is 54:5; Jer 3:14), to rejoice with His people as a bridegroom rejoices in the presence of His bride (Is 62:5). This hope is realized in the coming of Jesus. When Jesus enters the life of a person, all else must withdraw because He is the bridegroom. This view of the story and the centuries long hope of the people helps us to understand the meaning of the harsh phrase of the bridegroom: "I do not know you!" Jesus also uses denial as a means to differentiate those not prepared for the Kingdom, as in Mt 10:33, whoever will have denied me before men, I also will deny before my Father, who is in heaven. Because of the lack of commitment and seriousness, the five foolish girls clearly show that they were not ready yet to commit themselves definitively to wed God. They needed some more time to prepare themselves: "Watch, because you do not know the day or the hour".

## **6. Psalm 63:2-9**

### **God's desire**

O God, thou art my God, I seek thee, my soul thirsts for thee; my flesh faints for thee, as in a dry and weary land where no water is. So I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary, beholding thy power and glory. Because thy steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise thee.

So I will bless thee as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on thy name. My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat, and my mouth praises thee with joyful lips, when I think of thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the watches of the night; for thou hast been my help, and in the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to thee; thy right hand upholds me.

## **7. Final Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice that which your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to, but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.



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

**08**NOV 2020 - THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## Prudence is my co-pilot

Some of us can still recite the four Cardinal Virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. They're good not just to recite but also to practice. Virtues are good habits; i.e., things we *don't* have to surrender for Lent. *Cardinal*, meanwhile, means “hinge.” Put together, the four hinge virtues swing open the door to a life well lived. Prudence is called the pilot of the virtues because it enables us to discern the good and how best to accomplish it. When a decision is important, reflect on it through the lens of scripture. How is God inviting you to proceed?

### Today's readings:

Wisdom 6:12-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13 ([154](#)).

*“Wisdom ‘is readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her.’ ”*

**09**NOV 2020 - FEAST OF THE DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA

## Open the door and look at all the people

Why would there be a feast day for a church? Because it's the “mother of all churches,” one that all Catholics can call their own, and so we all celebrate its dedication in the year 324. Christianity had only recently been legalized in the Roman Empire, and the Lateran Basilica—full name: Cathedral of the Most Holy Savior and of Saints John the Baptist and the Evangelist in the Lateran—was the first church in Rome and, to this day, remains the pope's church as the bishop of Rome. Keep passing on the faith of the Mother Church that has been passed down to you through the centuries.

### Today's readings:

Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12; 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17; John 2:13-22 ([671](#)).

*“His disciples recalled the words of scripture, ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’ ”*

**10**NOV 2020 - MEMORIAL OF LEO THE GREAT, POPE, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

## The great pope who did good things

Leo the Great was the first pope to be called “Great.” His diplomacy kept Attila the Hun from attacking Rome. His authoritative teaching solidified the role of the bishop of Rome as Saint Peter's successor. And his eloquent prose—detailing the two natures of Jesus Christ, both human and divine—was key to defeating heresy at the Council of Chalcedon. “Peter has spoken through Leo,” marveled the bishops of Chalcedon. “The infancy of the Babe is exhibited by the humiliation of swaddling clothes,” wrote Leo, while “the greatness of the Highest is declared by the voices of angels.”

### Today's readings:

Titus 2:1-8, 11-14; Luke 17:7-10 ([492](#)).

*“We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.”*

**11**NOV 2020 - MEMORIAL OF MARTIN OF TOURS, BISHOP

## Half of what I have is yours

Fourth-century Bishop Martin of Tours was not born to the faith but chose it for himself as a young man. He followed his father into the Roman army but found that he could not remain a soldier; Martin is one of the earliest documented conscientious objectors. Yet it was while serving as a soldier that perhaps the most famous episode of Martin's life occurred. Coming upon a naked beggar, Martin took out his sword, cut his own cloak in two, and shared it with the poor soul. Martin was a founder of monasteries, a popularly acclaimed bishop, destroyer of pagan shrines and builder of churches, and most of all, he inspires us to share what we have with those most in need.

**Today's readings:**

Titus 3:1-7; Luke 17:11-19 ([493](#)).

*“Stand up and go; your faith has saved you.”*

## 12 NOV 2020 - MEMORIAL OF JOSAPHAT, BISHOP, MARTYR

### Draw courage from Josaphat

Books of saints have long been filled with the gore of martyrs, but the story of Josaphat is shocking even in that bloody context. Josaphat, a Polish Byzantine priest and archbishop, was embroiled in controversy for much of his life because of his emphasis on reforming lax practices within the church and striving for unity among Christians. After years of wrangling, his enemies mobbed him, killed him, and tossed his beaten body into a river in 1623. With Josaphat's courage as a model, take a step today to support the ongoing reform efforts in the church, including efforts to end sexual abuse in the church we love.

**Today's readings:**

Philemon 7-20; Luke 17:20-25 ([494](#)).

*“No one will announce, ‘Look, here it is,’ or, ‘There it is.’ For behold, the kingdom of God is among you.”*

## 13 NOV 2020 - MEMORIAL OF FRANCES XAVIER CABRINI, VIRGIN

### Do likewise

What would we do if a saint of God rose in our midst today and instructed us in the proper care of people who are immigrants and refugees at our borders? Would that saint's halo give us any more certitude to stand behind every effort to protect the lives of women, men, and children seeking a safe home? Just over 100 years ago we had such a saint showing us the way. Frances Xavier Cabrini was called by Pope Leo XIII to tend to the many immigrants landing on the shores of the United States in the late 1800s. She built schools, orphanages, and hospitals to tend to them. Though she met resistance, she persisted, and her legacy lives on in each of us and our ancestors, for the most part immigrants. How do we honor this legacy in our own treatment of immigrants and refugees today?

**Today's readings:**

2 John 4-9; Luke 17:26-37 ([495](#)).

*“Look to yourselves that you do not lose what we worked for.”*

## 14 NOV 2020 - OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

### Let your soul proclaim greatness

Take an opportunity today to celebrate Mary, who found her voice in difficult circumstances so that we might follow her voice and find our own in these difficult times. Read her “Magnificat” (Luke 1:46-56) for a canticle to the power of trust. Imagine how she waited years to understand her son's calling, grieved his inconceivable death, and then, in the many years of her grief, nurtured the early Christian community. That's greatness!

**Today's readings:**

3 John 5-8; Luke 18:1-8 ([496](#)).

*“Will [God] be slow to answer them?”*