

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: Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (A)

Sunday, November 29, 2020

1. LECTIO

a) Initial Prayer:

Father in heaven, our hearts desire the warmth of your love and our minds are searching for the light of your Word. Increase our longing for Christ our Saviour and give us the strength to grow in love, that the dawn of his coming may find us rejoicing in his presence and welcoming the light of his truth. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading: Mark 13:33-37

“Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from his home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own work to do; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow or dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I am saying to you I say to all: ‘Stay awake!’”

b) A Moment of Silence:

so that the Word of God may enter into our hearts and enlighten our lives.

2. MEDITATIO

a) A Key to the Reading:

“Watch!” This is the key word in the short passage that the Church presents for the liturgy of the first Sunday of Advent. To watch, to stay awake, to wait for the return of the master of the house, not to sleep, this is what Jesus asks of a Christian. These four verses of the Gospel of Saint Mark are part of the eschatological discourse in chapter thirteen. This chapter speaks of the destruction of the Temple and of the city of Jerusalem. Jesus takes up a point from the observation made by a disciple: “Master, look at the size of those stones!” (Mk 13:1). Jesus, then, clarifies the idea: “You see these great buildings? Not a single stone will be left on another; everything will be pulled down” (Mk 13:2). The Temple, the tangible sign of the presence of God in the midst of his chosen people, Jerusalem “built as a city, in one united whole” where “the tribes go up, the tribes of Yahweh, a sign for Israel to give thanks to the name of Yahweh” (Ps 122:4), all this, the sure sign of the promise made to David, sign of the covenant, all this will be destroyed...it is only a sign of something else to come. The disciples, rendered curious, ask the Lord who is sitting on the mount of Olives in front of the Temple: “Tell us, when is this going to happen, and what sign will there be that it is all about to take place?” (Mk 13:4). After the Jewish apocalyptic style inspired by Daniel, Jesus limits his reply to proclaiming the warning signs (false christs and prophets who will deceive by proclaiming the coming of the imminent times, persecutions, signs in the powers of heaven. cf.: Mk 13:5-32), “But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father” (Mk 13:32).

This leads us to understand the importance of a watchful and attentive waiting for the signs of the times that help us to welcome the “master of the house” (Mk 13:35). When he comes, all things will disappear, “the power of the servants” (Mk 13:34) also the signs that help us remember his benevolence (temple, Jerusalem, house). When the master comes, the “servants” and “the doorkeeper” (Mk 13:34) no longer care about the signs but take pleasure in the master himself: “Look! The bridegroom! Go out and meet him” (Mt 25:6 + Mk 2:19- 20).

Jesus often asked his disciples to watch. In the garden of Olives, on the Thursday night just before the passion, the Lord says to Peter, James and John: “Wait here, and stay awake” (Mk 14:34; Mt 26:38). Watching helps us not to fall into temptation (Mt 26:41) but to stay awake. In the garden of Olives, the disciples fall asleep because the flesh is weak even though the spirit is willing (Mk 14:38). Anyone who sleeps goes to ruin, like Samson who allowed

himself to be put to sleep, thus losing his strength, the gift of God (Jud 16:19). We must stay awake always and not fall asleep and watch and pray that we may not be deceived and thus go to our perdition (Mk 13:22 + Jn 1:6). Thus “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (Eph 5:14).

b) Questions to Orientate the Meditation and Make It Relevant:

- What does watching mean to you?
- The Lord foretells the destruction of the Temple and of the city of Jerusalem, the pride of the chosen people and symbols of the presence of God. Why does Jesus foretell their destruction?
- The Temple and the holy city were concrete forms of the covenant between God and his people. But these have gone through destruction. What are our concrete forms of the covenant? Do you think they will experience the same fate?
- Jesus calls us to transcend all forms and to attach ourselves to him. What things, forms and signs do you think the Lord is asking you to transcend so as to attach yourself more closely to him?
- Are you asleep? In what sense?
- Do you live always in expectation of the coming of the Lord? Is Advent a time for you to remember the element of waiting in the life of a Christian?

3. ORATIO

a) Psalm 96:

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.

For all the gods of the peoples are idols; but the Lord made the heavens.

Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts!

Worship the Lord in holy array; tremble before him, all the earth!

Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!

Yea, the world is established, it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity."

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

let the field exult, and everything in it!

Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes,
for he comes to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.

b) Moments for a Prayerful Silence:

We give you thanks, O God our Father, for your son Jesus who came to raise us up and set us on the right way.

When you awaken in our hearts a thirst for prayer and loving service, you prepare us for the dawn of that new day when our glory will be made manifest with all the saints in the presence of the Son of Man.

4. CONTEMPLATIO

Contemplation means to know how to adhere with one's whole heart and mind to the Lord who through his Word transforms us into new persons who always do his will. "Now that you know this, blessed are you if you behave accordingly." (Jn 13:17)



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

29NOV2020 - FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Keep your eyes open

Nothing is more empowering than a fresh start. Advent brings with it a new gospel to guide us through the new liturgical year: Mark, the shortest of the four narratives about Jesus. Consider reading all 16 chapters at the start of the liturgical year to grasp the breathless beauty of Mark's story. Reflect on other ways to stay alert to new spiritual discoveries, in keeping with Jesus' summons: "Watch!" Pay attention, not just to the news of the day but also to the movements of the Spirit in you. Where might you be prompted to forgive, be generous, get involved, or keep silent?

Today's readings:

Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37 ([2](#)).

"What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

30NOV2020 - FEAST OF ANDREW, APOSTLE

First responder

Saint Andrew has a special place in the collective heart of Scotland. He is sometimes known as the "first called" apostle because of his early encounter and following of Jesus, alongside his better-known brother and fellow fisherman Simon Peter. When confronting his own crucifixion in the year 60, it is said Andrew chose an X-shaped cross, or saltire, because he felt unworthy to be crucified on the same kind of cross as Jesus. That saltire is now Scotland's national flag. Follow the Scottish example: Give first-called Andrew a special place in your heart.

Today's readings:

Romans 10:9-18; Matthew 4:18-22 ([684](#)).

"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

01DEC2020 - ADVENT WEEKDAY

A light shines in the darkness

In this first week of Advent, the church highlights the theme of hope. We remember that the "people who walk in darkness will see a great light." Good news at this time of long nights as we are reeling mentally, physically, financially, emotionally from the coronavirus pandemic and find it hard to cope. But today is also World AIDS Day, a time to remember another virus-borne pandemic that has killed more than 30 million worldwide, calling to mind the inspiring way our world can come together at its best to respond to terrible diseases. Pray for an increase in hope and healing today.

Today's readings:

Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21-24 ([176](#)).

"There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain."

02DEC2020 - ADVENT WEEKDAY

Martyrs in our time

Forty years ago today, four American churchwomen were murdered and dumped in a shallow grave in a cow pasture in Santiago Nonualco, El Salvador. Maryknoll sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline sister Dorothy Kazel, and lay missionary Jean Donovan were victims of the country's civil war, killed by members of the Salvadoran National Guard. The women knew they faced danger and yet they could not leave the people. Jean Donovan wrote in a letter two weeks before her death: "Several times I have decided to leave El Salvador. I almost could, except for the children, the poor bruised victims of this insanity." Inspired by the life and martyrdom of Archbishop Saint Oscar Romero, all four women shared a commitment to the church's "preferential option for the poor." Ita, Maura, Dorothy, and Jean—you walk with us still and we remember.

Today's readings:

Isaiah 25:6-10a; Matthew 15:29-37 ([177](#)).

"Jesus summoned his disciples and said, 'My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they . . . have nothing to eat.' "

03DEC2020 - MEMORIAL OF FRANCIS XAVIER, PRIEST

Gain from apparent loss

While focus is often on Francis' youthful fervor, which sparked his missionary adventures in Asia, less emphasis falls on his maturation. In Japan, he learned to appreciate local culture, connecting it with the gospel. While ocean travel in the 16th century was perilous, long separation from Ignatius of Loyola may have been an even greater suffering. Francis was one of Ignatius' first companions at the founding of the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, as they are commonly known. And imagine Francis' disappointment when he couldn't reach his ultimate dream destination: China. Have you ever had a "dream deferred," an unrealized goal? What have you learned from the apparent failure that you might not have learned from success?

Today's readings:

Isaiah 26:1-6; Matthew 7:21, 24-27 ([178](#)).

"The house . . . did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock."

04DEC2020 - MEMORIAL OF JOHN OF DAMASCUS, PRIEST, RELIGIOUS, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

An iconic witness

History takes some strange turns. John Damascene is considered one of the great fathers of the Eastern Church, known today for its beautiful iconographic representations of the communion of saints. Yet back in the seventh century, John had to *defend* the use of icons against a movement in the East to ban them. And who protected him from being arrested by his powerful opponents? The Muslim caliph of Damascus under whose rule John lived and served administratively. Beneath the twists of history, search for the hidden story of salvation, unfolding through the centuries and before our eyes in these iconic times as well.

Today's readings:

Isaiah 29:17-24; Matthew 9:27-31 ([179](#)).

"Then he touched their eyes and said, 'Let it be done for you according to your faith.' And their eyes were opened."

05DEC2020 - ADVENT WEEKDAY

Pay it forward

Why is it that the season of Lent seems to get all the instructions of what to do—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—but with Advent, we have no handy summary about what to actually do during the season—besides wait? Sure, we have our creches and wreaths, maybe even a Jesse tree or, better yet, an Advent calendar with chocolate hidden behind each door. While all these customs are good, how can we "effect"—that is, bring about—the new life we so eagerly await? The world may have an answer for us. Today marks International Volunteer Day. How can you put into action on behalf of others your faith and expectation of new life in God?

Today's readings:

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Matthew 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6-8 ([180](#)).

"Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give."