

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: Pentecost Sunday (A)

Sunday, May 31, 2020

The Mission of the Community

“Peace be with you!”

John 20, 19-23

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:

The disciples were gathered together, and the doors were well closed. They were afraid of the Jews. All of a sudden, Jesus stood in their midst and said: “Peace be with you!” After showing them the hands and his side, once again he said: “Peace be with you”! As the Father has sent me, I also send you!” And immediately he gave them the gift of the Spirit so that they could forgive sins and reconcile persons among themselves and with God. To reconcile and to construct peace! Behold this is the mission which they received and which endures up until today!

Humanity is lacking peace more and more: to put together the pieces of a disintegrated life, to reconstruct human relationships, broken because of the injustices committed and because of so many other reasons. Jesus insists on peace, and he repeats it several times! During the reading of the brief text of the Gospel of this Pentecost Sunday, we try to be attentive to the attitudes of Jesus as well as to those of the disciples, and to the words of Jesus which he pronounces with such solemnity.

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

John 20, 19-20: The description of the experience of the Resurrection

John 20, 21: the sending out: “As the Father has sent me, I also send you”

John 20, 22: The gift of the Spirit

John 20, 23: The power to forgive sins

c) The Text:

19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' 20 and, after saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the



Lord, 21 and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' 22 After saying this he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained.

3. A moment of prayerful silence

so that the Word of God may penetrate and enlighten our life.

4. Some questions

to help us in our personal reflection.

- a) What struck you most in the description of the experience of the Resurrection?
- b) Which are the characteristics of the Mission which the disciples receive?
- c) Which are the characteristics of the action of the Holy Spirit which Jesus communicates to us?
- d) How important is all this for the life of our community today?
- e) Jesus insists: "Peace be with you!" Which steps should I take to reconstruct the peace and the broken relationships among persons?

5. For those who desire to deepen more on this theme

- a) The context in which the Gospel of John was written:

The text of the Gospel of John is like a very beautiful fabric, made with three threads of different colours. The three threads are so well combined with one another that it is not always possible to see when one passes from one thread to the other. (i) The first thread are the facts of the life of Jesus, which took place in the year thirty in Palestine, preserved in the memory of the Beloved Disciple and of many other witnesses (I Jn 1, 1-4). (ii) The second thread are the facts of the life of the communities. Because of their faith in Jesus and convinced of his presence, in their midst, the communities enlightened their life with the Word and the gestures of Jesus. That influenced the description of the facts. For example, the conflicts of the communities with the Pharisees towards the end of the first century indicate the way in which are described the conflicts of Jesus with the Pharisees. (iii) The third thread are the comments made by the Evangelist. In certain passages, it can hardly be perceived when Jesus finishes speaking and the redactor begins to knit in his own comments. (Jn 2, 22; 3, 16-21; 7, 39; 12, 37-43; 20, 30-31).

- b) Comment on the Text:

John 20, 19-20: A description of the experience of the Resurrection

Jesus becomes present in the community. Not even the closed doors prevent him from being in the midst of those who do not recognize him. Even today, it is the same thing! When we are gathered together, even if all the doors are closed, Jesus is in our midst! And also today, the first word of Jesus, will always be: "Peace be with you!"

He shows the signs of the Passion on his hands and his side. The Risen Lord is the Crucified Lord! The Jesus who is with us in the community is not a glorious Jesus who had nothing in common with the life of the people. But it is the same Jesus who came on this earth and who bears the signs of his Passion. And today these same signs are found in the suffering of the people. They are the signs of hunger, of torture, of wars, of sickness, of violence, of injustice. So many signs! And in the persons who react and struggle for life, Jesus resurrects and makes himself present in our midst.

John 20, 21: The sending out: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you!"

From this Crucified and Risen Jesus we receive the mission, the same one that He received from the Father. And for us also he repeats: "Peace be with you!" The repetition confirms the importance of peace. To construct peace forms part of the mission. The Peace which Jesus gives us means much more than the absence of war. It signifies to construct a human, harmonious environment, in which persons can be

themselves, with all that is necessary to live, and where they can live happy and in peace. In one word, it means to construct a community according to the community of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

John 20.22: Jesus gives the gift of the Spirit

Jesus breathed and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit". And therefore, it is with the help of the Holy Spirit that we can carry out the mission which He entrusts to us. In the Gospel of John, the Resurrection (Passover) and the effusion of the Spirit (Pentecost) are one same thing. All takes place in the same moment.

John 20, 23: Jesus gives the power to forgive sins

The central point of the mission of peace is found in reconciliation, in the effort to overcome the barriers which separate us: "to those to whom you forgive sins, they will be forgiven and to those to whom you do not forgive them, will not be forgiven". Then this power of reconciliation and of forgiving is given to the disciples. In the Gospel of Matthew, this same power is also given to Peter (Mt 16,19) and to the communities (Mt 18, 18). A community without pardon and without reconciliation is not a Christian community.

c)To deepen more:

i) The action of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John

In Hebrew the same word is used to say wind and spirit. The wind has in itself a goal, a direction: North wind, South wind. The same for the Spirit of God (the wind of God) has in itself a goal, a project, which manifests itself in many ways in the works which the Spirit of God fulfils in creation, in history, and above all, in Jesus. The great promise of the Spirit becomes present in the prophets: the sight of the dry bones which become alive, thanks to the force of the Spirit of God (Ez 37, 1-14); the effusion of the Spirit of God on all people (Gl 3, 1-5); the vision of the Messiah the Servant who will be anointed by the Spirit to re-establish the right on earth and to proclaim the Good News to the poor (Is 11, 1-9; 42, 1; 44, 1-3; 61, 1-3). The prophets foresee a future in which the People of God is reborn thanks to the effusion of the Spirit (Ez 36, 26-27; Ps 51, 12: cf. Is 32, 15-20).

In the Gospel of John these prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus. As it happened in creation (Gen 1, 1), in the same way the Spirit appears and descends on Jesus "under the form of a dove from heaven" (Jn 1, 32), It is the beginning of the new creation! Jesus pronounces the words of God and communicates to us the Spirit in abundance (Jn 3, 34). His words are Spirit and life (Jn 6, 63). When Jesus leaves, he says that he will send another consoler, another defender whom he will leave with us. It is the Holy Spirit (Jn 14, 16-17). By his passion, death and resurrection, Jesus wins for us the gift of the Spirit. When he appears to the Apostles, he breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit!" (Jn 20, 22). The first effect of the action of the Holy Spirit in us is reconciliation: "to those to whom you remit sins, they will be remitted and to those to whom you do not remit them, they will not be remitted!" (Jn 20, 23). Through Baptism we all receive this same Spirit of Jesus (Jn 1, 33). The Spirit is like the water which springs from within the person who believes in Jesus (Jn 7, 37-39; 4, 14). The Spirit is given to us to be able to remember and understand the full significance of the Words of Jesus (Jn 14, 26; 16, 12-13). Animated by the Spirit of Jesus we can adore God every where (Jn 4, 23-24). Here the liberty of the Spirit is lived. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom", Saint Paul confirms it (2 Cor 3, 17).

ii) Shalom: the construction of peace

In the Gospel of John, the first encounter between the Risen Jesus and his disciples is marked by a greeting: "Peace be with you!" The peace which Jesus gives us is different from the Pax Romana, constructed by the Roman Empire (Jn 14, 27). Peace in the Bible (shalom), is a word rich with a deep significance. It means integrity of the persons before God and others. It means also a full life, happy, abundant (Jn 10, 10). Peace is the sign of the presence of God, because our God is a God of Peace "Yahweh is Peace" (Jer 6, 24). "May the Peace of God be with you!" (Rom 15, 33). This is the reason

why the peace of God produces violent reactions. As the Psalm says: “Too long have I lived among people who hate peace. When I speak of peace they are all for war!” (Ps 120, 6-7). The peace which Jesus gives us is the sign of a “sword” (Mt 10, 34). It is necessary to have trust, to struggle, to work, to persevere in the Spirit in order that the peace of God may triumph one day. And that day “love and truth will meet, justice and peace will embrace” (Ps 85, 11). And then, “The Kingdom of God will be justice, peace and joy, and these will be the fruits of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14, 17) and “God will be all in all” (I Co 15, 28).

6. Psalm 145

Description of the Kingdom of God

I shall praise you to the heights,
God my King, I shall bless your name for ever and ever.
Day after day I shall bless you,
I shall praise your name for ever and ever.
Great is Yahweh and worthy of all praise,
his greatness beyond all reckoning.

Each age will praise your deeds to the next,
proclaiming your mighty works.
Your renown is the splendor of your glory,
I will ponder the story of your wonders.
They will speak of your awesome power,
and I shall recount your greatness.
They will bring out the memory of your great generosity,
and joyfully acclaim your saving justice.
Yahweh is tenderness and pity,
slow to anger, full of faithful love.
Yahweh is generous to all,
his tenderness embraces all his creatures.

All your creatures shall thank you, Yahweh,
and your faithful shall bless you.
They shall speak of the glory of your kingship
and tell of your might,
making known your mighty deeds to the children of Adam,
the glory and majesty of your kingship.
Your kingship is a kingship for ever,
your reign lasts from age to age.
Yahweh is trustworthy in all his words,
and upright in all his deeds.

Yahweh supports all who stumble,
lifts up those who are bowed down.
All look to you in hope and
you feed them with the food of the season.
And, with generous hand,
you satisfy the desires of every living creature.
Upright in all that he does,

Yahweh acts only in faithful love.
He is close to all who call upon him,

all who call on him from the heart.
He fulfills the desires of all who fear him,
he hears their cry and he saves them.
Yahweh guards all who love him,
but all the wicked he destroys.
My mouth shall always praise Yahweh,
let every creature bless his holy name for ever and ever.

7. Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank 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 practise the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.



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

31May2020 - SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

The Spirit is still at work

The traditional Pentecost hymn is “Veni Sancte Spiritus” (“Come, Holy Spirit”). It’s called the Golden Sequence—a sequence being a prayer that precedes the gospel reading. It became part of the Pentecost liturgy in the 16th century but was written earlier, probably by Cardinal Stephen Langton of Canterbury around the year 1200. It’s tempting to treat the Mass as something that fell from heaven as is. Liturgy is a collaborative effort, woven across centuries—and evolving still. Put your unique stamp on it.

Today's readings:

Day: Acts 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23 ([63](#)).

“Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ ”

01Jun2020 - MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

Sing of Mary

Today’s celebration of the Blessed Virgin Mary is still new for the Catholic Church, having been decreed by Pope Francis in 2018. But Mary’s tender loving care has been sung throughout the ages. Yes, we experience her maternal protection for each and every one of us. But it’s another thing to honor her universally as protectress of the Mystical Body of Christ. That’s why this memorial comes when it does: the day after Pentecost Sunday—the birthday of the church. Let us honor Mary in the manner of the decree, as “Mother of the Redeemer and Mother of the Redeemed”—namely, Christ’s mother and ours.

Today's readings:

Genesis 3:9-15, 20 or Acts 1:12-14; John 19:25-34 ([572A](#)).

“Behold, your mother.”

02Jun2020 - MEMORIAL OF MARCELLINUS AND PETER, MARTYRS

Take notice

Today’s rather obscure saints from the early church are included in the Roman Martyrology, a catalog of saints who suffered martyrdom during the era of persecution of early Christians. While some claim Catholicism places too much emphasis on suffering and death, recent events suggest there is a deeper wisdom at work in the Martyrology. In times of crisis, heroic witness often involves willingness to suffer or perhaps even die for a worthy cause. Honor martyrs past and present for their witness.

Today's readings:

2 Peter 3:12-15a, 17-18; Mark 12:13-17 ([354](#)).

“Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”

03Jun2020 - MEMORIAL OF CHARLES LWANGA AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

And the youth shall lead us

The world today is blessed with many young people willing to take a stand on major issues of our time. They work to end violence in schools and on our streets, protect lives, and ensure that future generations and the earth will thrive. Today in the church we honor a group of teens and 20-somethings who stood up for one another amid the threat of violence and death. Charles Lwanga and his 21 companions were martyred in Uganda in 1886 because

their Catholic faith opposed the ruling king's violent ways. In light of your faith, when and where are you called to take a stand?

Today's readings:

2 Timothy 1:1-3, 6-12; Mark 12:18-27 ([355](#)).

"I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have."

04Jun2020 - Not worth fighting about

Timothy was a peacemaker in the early church. He urged members of newly formed congregations to work out their differences rather than foster needless division. Sadly church life (Catholic and otherwise) still involves far too many stories of division—sometimes over the smallest things. Whatever your community's issue might be, be a voice for reasonable compromise.

Today's readings:

2 Timothy 2:8-15; Mark 12:28-34 ([356](#)).

"Tell them in the name of God that there must be no wrangling about words: all that this ever achieves is the destruction of those who are listening."

05Jun2020 - MEMORIAL OF BONIFACE, BISHOP, MARTYR

Aging can bring strengths

The COVID-19 crisis highlights the health risks older folks face. At the same time, it has led occasionally to examples of ageism—the tendency to see someone as weak or infirm simply because of their age. Saint Boniface would have none of that. Traversing the rugged terrain of what is now Germany during the wild and untamed Middle Ages, he continued his tireless evangelization efforts well into his 70s. In fact, only martyrdom could bring his ministry to a close. "Respect your elders" means respecting their ability to continue making meaningful contributions.

Today's readings:

2 Timothy 3:10-17; Mark 12:35-37 ([357](#)).

"From all these things the Lord delivered me."

06Jun2020 - MEMORIAL OF NORBERT, BISHOP

Humble pie belongs on every menu

Saint Norbert was a key figure in reforming the medieval church and monastic life. An ascetic at heart, he wore the simplest garb and walked barefoot even in winter. Having been appointed archbishop of Magdeburg in 1126 against his wishes, he arrived at the episcopal residence only to be met by a doorman who took him to be a beggar and turned him away! Church officials quickly explained the error to the doorman, but Norbert turned to him and said, "You were right the first time." A healthy sense of humility will take each of us far.

Today's readings:

2 Timothy 4:1-8; Mark 12:38-44 ([358](#)).

"Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury."