

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: Trinity Sunday (A)

Sunday, June 7, 2020

"God so loved the world!"

The Trinity is the best community

John 3:16-18

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 silence in us 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 on the way to 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 the Father to us and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.

2. Reading

a) A key to guide the reading:

- These few verses are part of a reflection of John the evangelist (Jn 3: 6-21), where he explains to his community of the end of the first century, the meaning of the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-15). In this dialogue, Nicodemus finds it difficult to follow Jesus' thinking. The same happened to the communities. Some of them, still under the influence of the criteria of the past, could not understand the newness that Jesus brought. Our text (Jn 3:16-18) is an attempt to overcome this difficulty.

- The Church too has chosen these three verses for the feast of the Blessed Trinity. In fact, they are an important key that reveals the importance of the mystery of the Triune God in our lives. When reading, let us try to keep in mind and in our hearts that in this text God is the Father, the Son is Jesus and love is the Holy Spirit. So, let us not try to penetrate the mystery. Let us halt in silence and in wonder!

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

Jn 3:16: Says that the love of God that saves manifests itself in the gift of the Son.

Jn 3:17: The will of God is to save, not to condemn.

Jn 3:18: God demands of us that we have the courage to believe in this love.

c) The text:

16: For this is how God loved the world: He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life.

17: For God sent His Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through Him the world might be saved.



18: No one who believes in Him will be judged; but whoever does not believe is judged already, because that person does not believe in the Name of God's only Son.

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 pleased or touched you most?
- b) After a careful examination of this brief text, what are the recurring key words?
- c) What is the central experience of the community by the evangelist that reveals itself in the text?
- d) What does the text tell us about the love of God?
- e) What does the text tell us about Jesus?
- f) What does the text tell us about the world?
- g) What does the text reveal to me?

5. A key to the reading

for those who wish to go deeper into the text.

- a) The context within which the words of Jesus appear in the Gospel of John:

* Nicodemus was a doctor who thought he knew the things of God. He watches Jesus with the book of the Law of Moses in his hand to see whether the new things announced by Jesus were in accordance with the book. In the conversation, Jesus points out to Nicodemus (and to all of us) that the only way one can understand the things of God is to be born again! The same thing happens today. Often, we are like Nicodemus: we accept only those things that agree with our ideas. We reject all else, thinking it contrary to tradition. But not all are like this. There are those who allow themselves to be surprised by events and who are not afraid of saying to themselves, "Be born again!"

* When recalling the words of Jesus, the evangelist has before his eyes the situation of the community towards the end of the first century, and it is for them that he writes. Nicodemus' doubts were also those of the community. Thus Jesus' reply was also a reply to the community. Quite probably, the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus was part of the baptismal catechesis, because the text says that people have to be reborn of water and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:6). In the brief commentary that follows, we focus on the key words that appear in the text and that are central to the Gospel of John. They serve as key words for the reading of the whole Gospel.

- b) Commentary on the text:

* John 3:16: To love is to give oneself for the sake of love. The word love, first of all, points to a deep experience in the relationship between persons. It includes feelings and values such as joy, sorrow, suffering, growth, giving up, giving oneself, realization, gift, commitment, life, death, etc. In the OT these values and feelings are summarized in the word *hesed*, which, in our Bibles, is usually translated as charity, mercy, fidelity or love.

In the NT, Jesus revealed this love of God in His meetings with people. He revealed this through feelings of friendship, kindness, as, for example, in His relationship with Martha's family in Bethany: "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus". He weeps at Lazarus' tomb (Jn 11:5, 33-36). Jesus faces His mission as a manifestation of love: "having loved His own....He loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1). In this love, Jesus reveals His deep identity with the Father: "As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you!" (Jn 15:9). He also says to us, "Love one another as I have loved you!" (Jn 15:12). John defines love this way: "This has taught us love – that He gave up His life for us; and we, too, ought to give up our lives for our

brothers" (1Jn 3:16). There was no other commandment apart from this for the community, "living the same kind of life as Jesus" (1Jn 2:6). Those who live love and reveal it in their words and attitudes, become Beloved Disciples.

* John 3:17: He loved the world and gave His life to save the world. The word world is found 78 times in John's Gospel, but with different meanings. First, "world" may mean the earth, the space inhabited by human beings (Jn 11:9; 21:25) or the created universe (17:5, 24). In our text, "world" means those who inhabit this earth, the whole of humanity, loved by God, who gave His Son for its sake (cf. Jn 1:9; 4:42; 6:14; 8:12). It may also mean a large number of people, in the sense of "the whole world" (Jn 12:19; 14:27). But in John's Gospel the word "world" means, above all, that part of humanity that is opposed to Jesus and so becomes his "adversary" or "opposition" (Jn 7:4,7; 8:23, 26; 9:39; 12:25). This "world", contrary to the liberating practice of Jesus, is dominated by the Adversary, Satan, also is called "prince of the world" (14:30; 16:11), who persecutes and kills the communities of the faithful (16:33), creating injustice, oppression, kept up by those in authority, by those who rule the empire and the synagogue. They practice injustice in the name of God (16:2). The hope that John's Gospel offers to the communities is that Jesus will conquer the prince of this world (12:31). He is stronger than the "world". "In the world you will have trouble, but be brave: I have conquered the world" (16:33).

* John 3:18: The Only Son of God who gives Himself up for us: One of the most ancient and most beautiful titles that the first Christians chose to describe the mission of Jesus is that of Defender. In Hebrew it is *Goël*. This term used to indicate the closest relative, the oldest brother, who had to redeem his brothers who might be threatened with the loss of their properties (cf. Lev 25:23-55). At the time of the Babylonian exile, every one, including the closest relative, lost everything. Then God became the *Goël* of His people. He redeemed His people from slavery. In the NT, it is Jesus, the only son, the first-born, the closest relative, who became our *Goël*. This term or title is translated diversely as savior, redeemer, liberator, advocate, oldest brother, consoler, and so on (cf. Lk 2:11; Jn 4:42; Acts 5:31, etc.). Jesus takes on the defense and the redemption of His family, of His people. He gave himself entirely, completely, so that we, His brothers and sisters, may live again in fraternal love. This was the service He gave us. It was thus that the prophecy of Isaiah that announced the coming of the Servant Messiah was fulfilled. Jesus Himself said, "For the Son of Man Himself did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom (*goël*) for many!" (Mk 10:45). Paul expresses this discovery in the following sentence: "He loved me and sacrificed Himself for me!" (Gal 2:20).

c) The mystery of the Trinity in the writings of John:

* Faith in the Most Blessed Trinity is the beginning and end of our belief. Whatever we say today with so much clarity about the Most Blessed Trinity, may be found in the New Testament. It is found there in seminal form and was developed over the centuries. Of the four evangelists, John is the one who helps us most to understand the mystery of the Triune God.

John emphasizes the deep unity between the Father and the Son. The mission of the Son is to reveal the love of the Father (Jn 17:6-8). Jesus comes to proclaim, "The Father and I are one" (Jn 10:30). There is such unity between Jesus and the Father, that those who see the face of the one see also the face of the other. By revealing the Father, Jesus communicates a new spirit, "the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father" (Jn 15:26). At the Son's request (Jn 14:16), the Father sends to each one of us this new Spirit to stay with us. This Spirit, who comes from the Father (Jn 14:16) and from the Son (Jn 16:7-8), reveals the deep unity that exists between Father and Son (Jn 15:26-27). Christians looked to the unity in God in order to understand the unity that should have existed among them (Jn 13:34-35; 17:21).

Today we say, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Apocalypse says, He who is, who was, and who is to come, from the seven spirits in His presence before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the First-born from the dead, the Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev 1:4-5). With these names, John tells us what the communities thought about and hoped for from the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit.

Let us see:

i) In the name of the Father: Alpha and Omega, Is, Was, Will be, Almighty.

Alpha and Omega. We would say A to Z (cf. Isa 44:6; Rev 1:17). God is the beginning and end of history. There is no room for another God! The Christians could not accept the pretence of the Roman Empire that divinized its emperors. Nothing that happens in life can be interpreted as simple coincidence outside the loving providence of this God of ours.

Is, Was, Will be (Rev 1:4, 8; 4:8). Our God is not a distant God. He was with us in the past, is with us now, will be with us in the future. He guides history, is in history, walks with His people. The history of God is the history of His people.

Almighty. This was an imperial title of kings after Alexander the Great. For Christians, the true king is God. This title expresses the creative power with which He guides His people. The title strengthens the certainty of victory and urges us to sing, even now, the joy of the New Heaven and of the New Earth (Rev 21:2).

ii) The name of the Son: Faithful Witness, First-born among the dead, Prince of the kings of the earth.

Faithful Witness: Witness means the same as martyr. Jesus had the courage to witness to the Good News of God the Father. He was faithful until death, and God's answer was the resurrection (Phil 2:9; Heb 5:7).

First-born among the dead: First-born is like saying oldest brother (Col 1:18). Jesus is the first-born who rises again. His victory over death will also be ours, His brothers and sisters!

Prince of the kings of the earth: This was a title given to Roman Emperors as official propaganda. The Christians gave this title to Jesus. To believe in Jesus was an act of rebellion against the empire and its ideology.

These three titles come from the messianic psalm 89, where the messiah is called Faithful Witness (Ps 89:38), First-born (Ps 89:28) The Most High above the kings of the earth (Ps 89:28). The first Christians took their inspiration from the Bible in order to formulate their doctrine.

iii) The name of the Holy Spirit: Seven lamps, Seven eyes, Seven spirits.

Seven Lamps: In Revelation 4:5, it is said that the seven spirits are the seven lamps burning before the Throne of God. There are seven because they represent the fullness of the action of God in the world.

There are seven burning lamps, because they symbolize the action of the Spirit who enlightens, refreshes and purifies (Acts 2:1). They stand before the Throne always ready to respond to any request from God.

Seven Eyes: In Revelation 5:6, it is said that the Lamb has seven eyes, symbol of the seven spirits of God sent throughout the earth. What a beautiful image! Suffice it to look at the Lamb to see the Spirit working there where the Lamb looks, for his eyes are the eyes of the Spirit. It is He who always looks at us!

Seven Spirits: The seven evoke the seven gifts of the Spirit mentioned in the prophet Isaiah and that will rest on the Messiah (Isa 11:2-3). This prophecy comes true in Jesus. The seven Spirits are, at the same time, of God and of Jesus. The same identification of the Spirit with Jesus appears at the end of the seven letters. It is Jesus who speaks in the letters, and at the end of each letter we read, "He who has ears let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches." Jesus speaks, the Spirit speaks. They are one.

6. Psalm 63: 1-9

O God, my soul thirsts for thee

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 without water.

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 what 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 forever and ever. Amen.



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

07 JUN₂₀₂₀ SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

The power in three

Faith, hope, love; body, mind, spirit; life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness; executive, judicial, legislative: There's something satisfying and complete about a list of three. Good things come in threes, too: from “bacon, lettuce, and tomato” to “Peter, Paul, and Mary.” Alert to the power of three, scripture uses it as the sum of completion. The prophet Jonah spends three days inside the fish to fully absorb a lesson in obedience. Jesus exits the tomb on the third day. We encounter God three ways: as Creator, Restorer, Sanctifier. O God of many faces—recreate, restore, bless our community!

Today's readings:

Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; John 3:16-18 ([164](#)).

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”

[Sunday Spanish Translation](#)

08 JUN₂₀₂₀

The cure for what ails us

Pope Francis said that living the Beatitudes means “going against the flow” of the world. What the world tells us—that wealth brings security, that power gives us strength, that pleasure makes us satisfied—is the opposite of what Jesus says. Francis asks us to let the Beatitudes “unsettle us . . . challenge us, and . . . demand a real change in the way we live.” We've clearly been upended in this sense by the current pandemic, and we have learned first-hand that nothing exempts us from vulnerability. Jesus was, is, and always will be our only hope. Live accordingly.

Today's readings:

1 Kings 17:1-6; Matthew 5:1-12 ([359](#)).

“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”

09 JUN₂₀₂₀ MEMORIAL OF EPHREM OF SYRIA, DEACON, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Rise and shine!

Leave it to Saint Ephrem to derive beauty from pain. As we feel the ripple effects of coronavirus, let's learn from a man who died in 373 during a plague—from contracting the disease of the people he was ministering to. Ephrem, named a doctor of the church for the poetic nature of his theology, wrote: “We give glory to you, Lord, who raised up your cross to span the jaws of death like a bridge by which souls might pass from the region of the dead to the land of the living.” Seek and share beauty today.

Today's readings:

1 Kings 17:7-16; Matthew 5:13-16 ([360](#)).

“Just so, your light must shine before others.”

10JUN₂₀₂₀

Most fulfilling of all

As children, many of us were required to memorize the Ten Commandments. It's likely we can still recite them and have a sense of their importance. However, the catechism teaches that it is the *Beatitudes* that "fulfill, refine, and surpass the old law to its perfection." And how many of us can recite *them* from memory or even know where to find them in the Bible? (Hint: For all eight, try [Matthew 5:3-12](#).) In these difficult and, for some, tragic days, as we seek God's presence in our midst, we ask for the grace to comfort those who mourn.

Today's readings:

1 Kings 18:20-39; Matthew 5:17-19 ([361](#)).

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill."

11JUN₂₀₂₀ MEMORIAL OF BARNABAS, APOSTLE

Make history

What was it like during the times of the apostle Barnabas, whose memorial is today? Thousands of people at a time were becoming Christians with no real formality or infrastructure yet in the church. There was the "grace of God" and "firmness of heart" at work, today's first reading tells us, but persecution and internal conflict too. Every era has its challenges and opportunities. How are you building the Body of Christ during your moment in history?

Today's readings:

Acts 11:21b-26; 13:1-3 ([580](#)); Matthew 5:20-26 ([362](#)).

"They sent Barnabas to go to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all."

12JUN₂₀₂₀

This most amazing day

Tucked within Muir Woods, a national memorial park in California, is a beautiful space called Cathedral Grove. Hikers are asked to maintain quiet as they behold the old-growth coastal redwood trees. Though not a "cathedral" in the ecclesial sense, the grove reminds us that nature is one of the surest places to experience the power and tenderness of God. Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si'*: "The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God." How do you experience this "caress of God," even in the potted plant in your own home?

Today's readings:

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-16; Matthew 5:27-32 ([363](#)).

"Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will pass by."

13JUN₂₀₂₀ MEMORIAL OF ANTHONY OF PADUA, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Treasure the baby and the Bible

The traditional depiction of Saint Anthony (1195-1231) holding the infant Jesus began with a 1580 painting by El Greco showing the Franciscan priest with a large open Bible in which one can see the very tiny baby emerging from the text. Over time in Christian art the image of the baby grew to become a life-size child in the arms of the saint, sometimes standing on a much smaller book and sometimes with the Bible missing all together. In times of quarantine and isolation, when we may not be able to enjoy the consolation of Jesus in Holy Communion, we can experience the Lord's presence in the Bible, which may have gone missing in our lives. If that is the case, you can invoke Saint Anthony for a return of your lost Bible!

Today's readings: 1 Kings 19:19-21; Matthew 5:33-37 ([364](#)).

"Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.'"