

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: 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Sunday, June 21, 2020

Witness to the Gospel without fear
Matthew 10: 26-33

1. OPENING PRAYER

In the darkness of a starless night,
a night of no sense,
You, the Word of life,
like lightning in the storm of forgetfulness,
entered within the bounds of doubt
under cover of the limits of precariousness
to hide the light.

Words made of silence and of the ordinary,
Your human words, heralds of the secrets of the Most High:
like hooks cast into the waters of death
to find man once more, immersed in his anxious follies,
and reclaim him, plundered,
through the attractive radiance of forgiveness.

To You, Ocean of Peace and shadow of eternal Glory,
I render thanks:

Calm waters on my shore that awaits the wave, I wish to seek You!
And may the friendship of the brothers protect me
when night falls on my desire for You. Amen.

2. READING

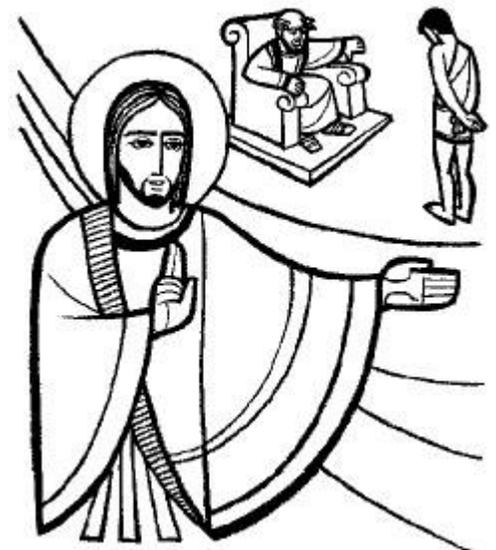
a) The text:

26 'So do not be afraid of them. Everything now covered up will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops. 28 'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell. 29 Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. 30 Why, every hair on your head has been counted. 31 So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. 32 'So if anyone declares himself for Me in the presence of human beings, I will declare Myself for him in the presence of My Father in heaven. 33 But the one who disowns Me in the presence of human beings, I will disown in the presence of My Father in heaven.

b) A moment of silence:

Let us allow the voice of the Word to resonate within us.

3. MEDITATION



a) Questions for reflection:

There is nothing hidden which will not be revealed: the truth under the veil of silence is spread more than if it is exposed in the avid or greedy hands of people who are deaf to the breath of the Spirit. Where do you place the Word of God that you listen to: in the power of your adventurous thoughts or in the sacrarium of your profound acceptance?

That which I tell you in the dark, tell it in the daylight: Christ speaks in the dark, in the secret of the heart. To offer His words to the light, these must go through your thought, within your feelings, in your entrails before they come to your lips. The words which you habitually say to others, are they words said in the secret of Him or rather syllables of thoughts which just come to mind?

And do not be afraid of those who kill the body: not anything nor anybody can do you harm if God is with you. They can make you a prisoner, but they cannot take away liberty and dignity from you because these cannot be seized by anybody. Fears, worry, suspicions, anxieties... can become a souvenir which is far away. When will you leave all this aside, trusting that God will not abandon you ever and will take care of you?

Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. God's Providence can be similar to destiny, but it is something different. Think of the sparrows which fall to the ground. It is not God who throws them down, but when they fall the Father is there. It is not God who sends sickness, but when people become ill, the Father is there with them. Our things belong to Him. Solitude, which frequently presses on us, is not abandonment. Will we look around to encounter the eyes of Christ who lives with us in that moment of desolation?

If anyone declares himself to be for Me in the presence of human beings, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father: Give Christ the courage of our faith in Him... this is a requirement of life in which God is not an accessory, but daily bread and the identity card of Himself. Does this challenge you or does it remain only a hidden desire? Even among the heads or leaders, says John, many believed in Him, but did not recognize Him openly because of the Pharisees, so as not to be expelled from the Synagogue. Would you risk your name for Him?

b) Key for the reading:

Do not fear! This is a key word, which, repeated three times, gives unity to the passage.

Probably it is a literary unity which joins together four isolated sayings. Faith requires as a basic disposition, not to fear. The themes which emerge: public proclamation of the Gospel (vv. 26-27), the availability to face martyrdom sacrificing physical life in order to attain eternal life (v. 28), images of trust in Providence (vv. 29-31), the courageous profession of faith in Christ (vv. 32-33).

The counter-positions are of a remarkable efficacy: veiled/unveiled, or covered/uncovered, hidden/known, darkness/light, body/soul, acknowledge/deny... which make evident the shore of a life lived evangelically. The veils of knowledge open themselves in the light and on the roofs of the universe the word heard in secret goes forth. The whole person is present to the heart of God, and if the creatures of the earth arouse tenderness, how much more the life of a creature-child. Belonging makes the difference in the witness.

v. 26. Do not be afraid of them, for everything now covered up will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. That which is covered is not reserved for few but it is simply kept waiting to be manifested. There is a time to keep hidden and a time to make manifest, as Qoheleth would say... to know how to keep the truth in the secret of the days that go by: this is what forges the credibility of the manifestation. A seed cannot be thrown into the air, it is put into the furrow of the heart, it is left to itself while it is transformed in dying, and it is attentively followed until it germinates and comes to light, until the spike is ripe and ready to be harvested. Every word of God requires that it pass through the furrow of one's own history in order to bear abundant fruit in due time.

v. 27. What I say to you in the dark, tell it in the daylight, and what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops. Jesus speaks in secret; we speak in the light. God speaks, we listen and we become His mouth for others. The darkness of the listening, of putting it in, of assimilation, precedes the dawn of every proclamation. And when from the housetops the good news will be heard, people will be obliged to look up. A treasure of glory is enclosed in every moment of listening. It is a moment of waiting which leads to the birth of light.

v. 28. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell. One can be afraid of those who can strike that which is not man in fullness: to stop earthly life is not equal to death. The only really fearful is God. But God also after death preserves the life for the human being. That is why we should not fear. Whatever can happen, God is with humanity. This is a certainty which permits us to sail on even in the midst of the most devastating storms, because the treasures of humanity are taken care of in God, and from the hands of God nobody can snatch the elect.

v. 29. Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. There are two sparrows, one penny. A minimum value but which is in the thought of the Father. Where life beats, there God is, completely. This attentive care enchants and consoles... and invites listening to everything that vibrates and presents holy images of the Eternal splendor. Two sparrows: two very small creatures, of a brief life. The value of things is not given to them because of the greatness or the strength, but from what animates, that which is "body". Therefore, every space where there is life which accepts the print of the Creator is a place of encounter with Him. It bears witness to His solicitude.

v. 30. Why every hair on your head has been counted. The solicitude or thoughtfulness of God extends itself even to counting the hair on our head. It is absurd, the way the Lord loves! When desolation and abandonment become the words of our today, it will be enough to count some of our hair to remember the presence of God with us. The protection of the Heavenly Father will not be lacking for the disciples of Jesus. The Mystery which embraces all cannot be less towards those who have chosen to follow His Son, leaving the earth of their human securities.

v. 31. So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows! If God uses His thought for two sparrows how much more will He think of us! Fear disappears before this living image of human and religious sensibility of Christ. God is in favor of humanity, not against humanity. And if He keeps silence it is not because of lack of care, but because His thoughts of us have broader perspectives which go beyond the horizons of earthly temporality.

v. 32. If anyone declares himself for Me in the presence of human beings, I will declare Myself for him in the presence of My Father in Heaven. One must acknowledge oneself. When you find yourself in a square crowded to the full among unknown faces, you have the experience of being a foreigner. But as soon as you see a familiar face, your heart expands and you make your way until you get close to him. This recognizing others allows one to manifest oneself before others and to expose oneself. Christ in the midst of the crowd is the familiar face to recognize Him as the Master and Lord of our life. And what fear can we have if we think that He will declare us before His Father in Heaven?

v. 33. But the one who disowns Me in the presence of human beings, I will disown in the presence of My Father in Heaven. Could we think of a vengeful God? This is not a discourse to "put wood into the fire", but a discourse which comes from an existential encounter. Christ will not be able to recognize as His own the one who will have chosen everything outside of Him. It is a discourse of fidelity and of respect for human liberty. God respects the creature to the point of not interfering in the space of his error. The Gospel demands belonging, not words and actions. The heart lives in heaven, when Christ is its beating of life!

4. PRAYER (Psalm 22:22-31)

I shall proclaim Your name to my brothers,
praise You in full assembly:
'You who fear Yahweh, praise Him!
All the race of Jacob,
honor Him! Revere Him,
all the race of Israel!'

For He has not despised nor disregarded
the poverty of the poor,
has not turned away His face,
but has listened to the cry for help.

Of You is my praise in the thronged assembly,
I will perform my vows before all who fear Him.
The poor will eat and be filled,
those who seek Yahweh will praise Him,
'May your heart live for ever.'

The whole wide world will remember
and return to Yahweh,
all the families of nations bow down before Him.
For to Yahweh, ruler of the nations,
belongs kingly power!
All who prosper on earth will bow before Him,
all who go down to the dust will do reverence before Him.

And those who are dead,
their descendants will serve Him,
will proclaim His name to generations
still to come;
and these will tell of His saving justice
to a people yet unborn:
He has fulfilled it.

5. CONTEMPLATION

Lord, among the veils of what I have received and have not given, may I be able to meditate and to accept everything from you. Let not my proclamation be an unconscious repeater, but rather a word possessed in so far as it has indwelling and digested for a long time. May the beauty of Your presence be unveiled to my senses, and in the mystery of Your unceasing giving may the veil of the encounter descend bringing You closer. The treasure hidden for centuries is now known, and from darkness to light, the dawn has raised for centuries, in a day without sunset which, shining on that which love has created and the sin being broken, it makes all things new. I will acknowledge You, my God, before my brothers because it will be impossible for me to hide the lamp that You have lit in my life. Who will give me the words which create me and make of my limitations a marvelous definition of what I am, I, in particular, like nobody else? Only You, Lord, have words of eternal life. And I will eat them and will offer them, at the cost of being devoured with them. It will be sufficient for me to feel that I am a sparrow to find again the hope when the tempest will fall on me, because the pennies that You give for the sparrows are not counted in Your knapsack. Amen.



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

21JUN2020 - TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

The true measure of love

How do we know we're loved? It's more than a matter of hearing the words or seeing them written in a card. Love has something to do with fidelity: showing up, being there, not leaving when the stampede is moving in the direction of the door. Love makes sacrifices, shares times of want along with seasons of plenty. Love generously supports and honestly challenges. Love lets go when the time is right. On this Father's Day, celebrate those who have embraced the vocation to show a father's love and helped you recognize your true worth.

Today's readings:

Jeremiah 20:10-13; Romans 5:12-15; Matthew 10:26-33 ([94](#)).

"So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

[Sunday Spanish Translation](#)

22JUN2020 - MEMORIAL OF PAULINUS OF NOLA, BISHOP

Simplicity is next to Godliness

Paulinus of Nola had it all—a successful career and wealth that enabled him to retire early—and then he didn't. After his only child died as a baby, he and his wife started shedding their life of leisure that sorrow must have rendered insensible. Today, as the world changes dramatically, and our lives with it, we can relate. Paulinus eventually became a monk and celebrated Christian poet. After his wife died, he was named bishop and ended up being friends with many future saints, including Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, and Gregory the Great. With God's help, you too can turn your own tragedies into triumph in Christ.

Today's readings:

2 Kings 17:5-8, 13-15a, 18; Matthew 7:1-5 ([371](#)).

"The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you."

23JUN2020 - **Essential work calls**

Today, designated International Widows' Day by the United Nations, is a good day to remember all families that have lost a loved one due to coronavirus—especially families that are most vulnerable, with children or a limited livelihood. As Pope Benedict XVI affirmed in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, "love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind is as essential" to the church "as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the gospel." How can you be Christ's hands and feet today, to help provide sustenance to hurting families and lessen their suffering?

Today's readings:

2 Kings 19:9b-11, 14-21, 31-35a, 36; Matthew 7:6, 12-14 ([372](#)).

"Do to others whatever you would have them do to you."

24JUN2020 - SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Give it away

John the Baptist is considered the opening act for Jesus, the forerunner and the one who prepared people to receive the message of Jesus. A better spokesperson could not be found. John's noble counsel that we share our extra coat and food with those who need them holds true today, ever more in these difficult times when we have learned the imperative need to care for one another. Head to the closet—what can you give away?

Today's readings:

Isaiah 49:1-6; Acts 13:22-26; Luke 1:57-66, 80 ([587](#)).

“What, then, will this child be?’ For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.”

25JUN2020 - Come quick, compassion

The COVID-19 pandemic leaves deep scars around the world. The words of today's psalm are vividly true: “May your compassion quickly come to us, for we are brought very low.” The church teaches that God's compassion is always at hand. Suffering can be excruciating, but God's presence endures. Be a compassionate presence to someone who is hurting. The heart you heal may end up being your own.

Today's readings:

2 Kings 24:8-17; Matthew 7:21-29 ([374](#)).

“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.”

26JUN2020 - Make us clean

Today is International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. This year's theme of "Health for Justice. Justice for Health" captures the complexity of the problem, including the need for widespread accountability and equal access to treatment. As a society, we recognize "international days" as a way to raise awareness about global problems and celebrate achievements. The bad news: Worldwide, 35 million people now suffer from drug disorders; the good news: Cooperation among nations is becoming more coordinated and sustained. In April 2020, during a month the church dedicated to the "drama of addiction," Pope Francis prayed that “those suffering from addiction may be properly helped and accompanied.” It is a prayer worth repeating.

Today's readings:

2 Kings 25:1-12; Matthew 8:1-4 ([375](#)).

“Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean.”

27JUN2020 - MEMORIAL OF CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Mellow sainthood

Fifth-century Saint Cyril of Alexandria began his career as archbishop with intolerant impulses, expelling Jews from the city. But with time he softened his views, and so is remembered instead for opposing the idea that Jesus' humanity was a mere disguise. How compassionate Jesus is toward the centurion in today's gospel, how tenderly he touches the hand of Peter's mother-in-law. Surely he shows the best of being human, nothing is camouflage. In the process of maturing, how have your own hard edges been softened and made compassionate?

Today's readings:

Lamentations 2:2, 10-14, 18-19; Matthew 8:5-17 ([376](#)).

“He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.”