

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: 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Sunday, June 28, 2020

Renouncing all to follow Jesus

"No one who prefers father or mother to me is worthy of Me!"

Matthew 10:37-42

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

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

Matthew 10:37: Love of Jesus must be above love of father and mother and children

Matthew 10:38: The cross is part of the following of Jesus

Matthew 10:39: To know how to lose one's life so as to keep it

Matthew 10:40-41: Jesus identifies Himself with the missionary and the disciple

Matthew 10:42: The least deed done to one of the least is rewarded

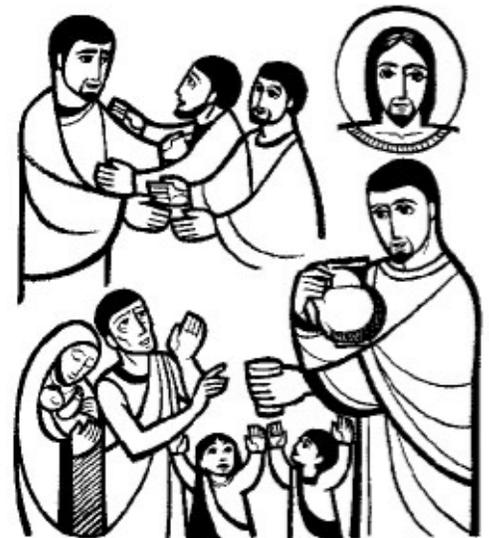
b) A key to the reading:

In the 13th Sunday of ordinary time, we meditate on the last section of the *Discourse on Mission* (Mt 10:1-42). This discourse contains words and counsels of Jesus, teaching us to carry out the mission of proclaiming the Good News of God. Jesus does not deceive, and points out clearly the difficulties that this mission implies. As we read this text, it is good to pay attention to what follows: "What is Jesus' basic demand of those who go on mission?"

c) Text:

37 'No one who prefers father or mother to Me is worthy of Me. No one who prefers son or daughter to Me is worthy of Me. 38 Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in My footsteps is not worthy of Me. 39 Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for My sake will find it.

40 'Anyone who welcomes you welcomes Me; and anyone who welcomes Me welcomes the one who sent Me. 41 'Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will have a prophet's reward; and anyone who welcomes a righteous person because he is righteous will have the reward of a righteous person. 42 'If anyone



gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then in truth I tell you, he will most certainly not go without his reward.'

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 part of the text touched you most? Why?
- b) What recommendations does this text hold for us? What is its basic demand?
- c) Jesus says, "No one who prefers father or mother to Me is worthy of Me" – How are we to understand this statement?
- d) What does the text tell us about the mission we must undertake as disciples of Jesus?

5. For those who wish to go deeper into the topic

a) The context of our text in the Gospel of Matthew:

The Gospel of Matthew organizes the words and actions of Jesus around *five* great discourses: (i) Matthew 5 to 7: The Sermon **on the Mount** describes the gateway to the Kingdom. (ii) Matthew 10: the **Discourse on the Mission** describes the way those who follow Jesus must proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom and the difficulties involved. (iii) Matthew 13: the **Discourse of the Parables**, by means of parallels taken from daily life, Jesus reveals the presence of the Kingdom in people's lives. (iv) Matthew 18: the **Discourse on Community** describes how Christians ought to live together in such a way that the community becomes a revelation of the Kingdom. (v) Matthew 24 and 25: the **Eschatological Discourse** describes the future coming of the Kingdom of God. Through this literary device, Matthew imitates *the five books of the Pentateuch*, and thus presents the Good News of the Kingdom as the *New Law of God*.

In the Discourse on the Mission (Mt 10:1-42), the Evangelist puts together words and recommendations of Jesus that shed light on the difficult situation of the Judeo-Christians towards the second half of the first century. He wants to encourage them not to lose heart in spite of the many and grave difficulties they have to face in proclaiming the Good News to the brothers and sisters of their race. It is indeed at this time, the 80's, that the Jews are recovering from the disaster of the destruction of Jerusalem which took place in the 70's, and are beginning to reorganize themselves in the regions of Syria and Galilee. A tension is growing between the "Synagogue" and the "Ecclesia". This tension, source of much suffering and persecution, forms the background to the Discourse on the Mission and, therefore, to the Gospel of the 13th Sunday of ordinary time.

b) A commentary on the text:

Matthew 10:37: *Love of Jesus must be greater than love of parents and children*

Jesus says, "No one who prefers father or mother to Me is worthy of Me; no one who prefers son or daughter to Me is worthy of Me". We find this same statement in the Gospel of Luke with even greater force: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Lk 14:26). Does Jesus then want to disintegrate family life? This cannot be so, because elsewhere He insists on the observance of the fourth commandment which binds us to love father and mother (Mk 7:8-13; 10:17-19). He Himself obeyed His parents (Lk 2:51). These seem to be contradictory statements. One thing is certain: Jesus does

not contradict Himself. We shall give an interpretation to show that the two statements are both true and not mutually exclusive.

Matthew 10:38: *The cross is part of following Jesus*

Jesus says, “Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow in My footsteps is not worthy of Me”. In Mark’s Gospel Jesus says, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me!” (Mk 8:34). In those days, the cross was the death sentence imposed by the Roman Empire for thieves and the marginalized. To take up one’s cross and follow Jesus was equivalent to agreeing to be marginalized by the unjust system of the Empire. Jesus’ cross is the consequence of the free commitment taken on to reveal the Good News that God is Father and that, therefore, all are to be accepted and treated as brothers and sisters. Because of this revolutionary proclamation, Jesus was persecuted and was not afraid to give up His life. *Greater love than this no man has, that he lay down his life for his friends.*

Matthew 10:39: *To know how to lose one’s life so as to keep it*

This manner of speaking was quite common among the early Christians because it expressed what they were living through. For instance, for Paul to be faithful to Jesus and obtain life, he had to lose everything he had: career, the respect of his people, and suffer persecution. The same happened to many Christians. Christians were persecuted for being Christian. Paul says, “I am crucified with Christ”. “I wish to experience His cross and his death, so that I may also experience His resurrection.” “I am crucified to the world and the world to me”. This is the paradox of the Gospel: The last is first, the one who loses wins, the one who gives all keeps all, the one who dies lives. The one who has the courage to lose life obtains it. This is a logic that is quite different from the neo-liberal system that rules the world today.

Matthew 10:40-41: *Jesus identifies Himself with the missionary and the disciple*

For the missionary and the disciple, it is very important to know that he/she will never be alone. If she/he remains faithful to her/his mission, she/he will have the certainty that Jesus identifies Himself with her/him, and through Jesus the Father will reveal Himself to those to whom the missionary and disciple proclaim the Good News. And so, just as Jesus reflected the face of the Father, so also the disciple should be a mirror where people can glimpse something of the love of Jesus.

Matthew 10:42: *The least deed done for the little ones, reveals the presence of the Father*

In order to change the world and human relationships, the political decisions of powerful people are not enough, nor are the decrees of Councils and of bishops. What is needed is a change in the lives of people, in interpersonal and community relationships; otherwise, nothing will change. That is why Jesus puts so much importance on small acts of sharing: a glass of water given to a poor person!

c) A deepening: To love father and mother, to hate father and mother!

One of the things that Jesus insists on for those who wish to follow Him is that of leaving behind father, mother, wife, children, sisters, house, land, to leave everything for love of Him and His Gospel (Lk 18: 29; Mt 19:29; Mk 10:29). He even commands us “to hate father, mother, wife, children, sisters, brothers. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciples” (cf. Lk 14:28). These demands are not just for some but for all those who wish to follow Him (Lk 14:25-26, 33). How can we understand these statements that seem to dismantle and break up all family ties? We cannot imagine Jesus demanding of all men and women in Galilee to leave their families, lands, villages to follow Him. In fact, this did not happen except for a small group of followers. So what is the meaning of these demands?

If we place the demand to leave one’s family within the social context of the period, we can see another meaning, much more fundamental and practical. The invasion of Palestine in 64 B.C. and the imposition

of the tribute by Herod (35 to 3 B.C.) and his son Herod Antipas (3 B.C. to 37 A.D.), a policy in favor of the Roman government, brought progressive impoverishment and growing unemployment. Through Herod's policy, supported by the Roman Empire, the Hellenic ideology permeated daily life, thus bringing with it growing individualism. All this caused the larger family, the clan and the community to disintegrate. Thus the small family began to feel bound to turn in on itself and not able to practice the law. Besides, the practice of ritual purity caused people to despise and exclude those persons and families that lived in legal impurity. The economic, social, political and religious context made it possible for families to turn in on themselves and weaken the clan. Preoccupation with family problems stopped people from uniting in **community**. It stopped the clan from realizing the aim for which it was created, that is, to offer real and adequate protection for families and persons, to preserve identity, to defend land, to prevent exclusion and to welcome the excluded and the poor, and thus to reveal the face of God. Now, for the Kingdom to reveal itself again in the sharing, it was necessary to break the vicious cycle. People had to overcome the strict limits of the small family to open themselves to the larger family and the Community. This is the context that forms the background to the words proclaimed by Jesus.

Jesus Himself gives an example. When His family tries to claim Him, He reacts and says, "Who are My mother and My brethren?" And, looking around, He says, "Behold My mother and My brethren! For whoever does the will God, he is My brother and sister and mother" (Mk 3:33-35). He stretched the family. He created community. The people He attracted and called were the poor and the excluded (Lk 4:18; Mt 11:25). He asked the same thing of those who wished to follow Him. The excluded and marginalized must be welcomed again into the sharing and thus feel welcomed by God (cf. Lk 14:12-14). This was the way to achieve the end of the Law that said, "There should be no one of you in need" (Deut 15:4).

Jesus tries to change the process of disintegration of the clan, of the community. Like the great prophets of the past, He seeks to consolidate community life in the villages of Galilee. He takes up again the deep meaning of the clan, of the family, of the community as an expression of the incarnation of the love of God in the love of neighbor. That is why He asks of those who wish to be His disciples to leave father, mother, wife, brother, sister, house, all! They have to lose their life in order to possess it! He is the guarantor of this: "Amen I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for My sake and for the Gospel's sake, who shall not receive now in the present time a hundredfold as much, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands – along with persecutions, and in the age to come life everlasting" (Mk 10:29-30). Truly, those who have the courage to break the closed circle of their family will find again, in the clan, in the community, a hundredfold whatever they have left: brother, sister, mother, child, land! Jesus does what people expected in messianic times: to lead back the hearts of parents to their children, and the hearts of children to their parents, to rebuild the clan, reweave the social pattern.

6. Psalm 19:7-14

The Law of Yahweh is perfect

The Law of Yahweh is perfect,
refreshment to the soul;
the decree of Yahweh is trustworthy,
wisdom for the simple.
The precepts of Yahweh are honest,
joy for the heart;

the commandment of Yahweh is pure,
light for the eyes.
The fear of Yahweh is pure,
lasting forever;
the judgements of Yahweh are true,
upright, every one,
more desirable than gold,
even than the finest gold;
His words are sweeter than honey,
that drips from the comb.

Thus Your servant is formed by them;
observing them brings great reward.
But who can detect his own failings?
Wash away my hidden faults.
And from pride preserve Your servant,
never let it be my master.
So shall I be above reproach,
free from grave sin.

May the words of my mouth always find favor,
and the whispering of my heart, in Your presence,
Yahweh, my rock, my redeemer.

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.

28JUN2020 - THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Welcome, prophet

Younger generations are quick to tell older ones how wrong they are about everything. But wise elders don't dismiss challenges to their perspective lightly—especially when they have some truth to them. A prophetic word may at times come more naturally to the young: free of the accretions of habit and with no comfortable niche to defend (yet). Take time today to talk across the age gap. Hear the words to another generation's songs, consider their protests, withhold instant judgment. Having a conversation partner, as we've learned from the time of isolation, is worth the investment.

Today's readings:

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a; Romans 6:3-4, 8-11; Matthew 10:37-42 ([97](#)).

“Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward.”

29JUN2020 - SOLEMNITY OF PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES

A matching set for all eternity

Saints Peter and Paul are together the patrons of Rome, where both were martyred around the same time. The two men had their differences, but they were central in establishing the Christian faith, which eventually won over the Roman Empire despite fierce opposition from officials. Saint Augustine wrote: “Both apostles share the same feast day, for these two were one . . . Let us embrace what they believed, their life, their labors, their sufferings, their preaching, and their confession of faith.” Amen.

Today's readings:

Day: Acts 12:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18; Matthew 16:13-19 ([591](#)).

“Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

30JUN2020 - MEMORIAL OF THE FIRST MARTYRS OF THE CHURCH OF ROME

Holiness involves dying a little each day

Tertullian, one of the first Christian theologians, wrote: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” The church's first martyrs are commemorated a day after the feast of Saints Peter and Paul—who tradition says were also victims of Nero's slaughter, beginning in 64. And martyrs aren't meant to be just a memory but also a model. Look no further than first responders and essential workers to see modern examples of those following the model of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Offer a sign of gratitude for their service.

Today's readings:

Amos 3:1-8; 4:11-12; Matthew 8:23-27 ([378](#)).

“Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?”

01JUL2020 - MEMORIAL OF JUNÍPERO SERRA, PRIEST

Live and learn

Missionaries in the age of the Iberian conquest of the Americas played a complex role, as protectors of the Indians but also projectors of the empire's power. Junípero Serra shares that mixed legacy—a mission priest who brought the saving power of Jesus but also was part of a colonization project that brought harsh treatment and epidemics. We know a little more about indigenous rights today—and about epidemics too, for that matter. Keep the faith, but mix it with a healthy dose of respect for different traditions.

Today's readings:

Amos 5:14-15, 21-24; Matthew 8:28-34 ([379](#)).
“Seek good and not evil, that you may live.”

02JUL2020 –

The healing power of compassion

Jesus healed in ways we consider miraculous, not because he had anything to prove about his power, but because his compassion urged him to alleviate suffering in whatever ways he could. His teaching and his healing went hand in hand: Both were focused on bringing us to wholeness. When he calls the paralytic man his son or child, it displays a mark of the tenderness he feels for all of us. Jesus draws us close in a healing embrace. Accept his healing today.

Today's readings:

Amos 7:10-17; Matthew 9:1-8 ([380](#)).
“Courage, child, your sins are forgiven.”

03JUL2020 - FEAST OF THOMAS, APOSTLE

Beyond all doubt

Thomas may have started out doubting, but once he saw and touched the truth, his faith took him very far indeed. It is said he traveled to the southwest coast of India in the year 52 and spent the last 20 years of his life there planting Christianity. To this day, “Saint Thomas Christians” in India trace their origins back to the apostle. In fact, Thomas is so popular that India has issued a commemorative stamp in his honor! Doubt does not oppose faith, it makes faith possible.

Today's readings:

Ephesians 2:19-22; John 20:24-29 ([593](#)).
“Thomas answered and said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ ”

04JUL2020 - INDEPENDENCE DAY

'Tis of thee

It's not all that well known that at its founding, the United States was not a terribly tolerant collection of colonies when it came to religion. Every colony but Pennsylvania had some form of anti-Catholic law at the time of Independence. Thankfully, customs, attitudes, and laws have evolved. But freedom can never be taken for granted, lest it be taken for good! Celebrate your freedom today—as an American and as a Catholic!

Today's readings:

Amos 9:11-15; Matthew 9:14-17 ([382](#)).
“The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”