

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: 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Sunday, August 2, 2020

The multiplication of the loaves
Matthew 14:13-21

1. LECTIO

Opening prayer:

Come Holy Spirit
Come Fire of love
Come Father of the poor
Come Unction of my soul.

b) Reading:

13 When Jesus received this news he withdrew by boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But the crowds heard of this and, leaving the towns, went after him on foot. 14 So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them and healed their sick. 15 When evening came, the disciples went to him and said, 'This is a lonely place, and time has slipped by; so send the people away, and they can go to the villages to buy themselves some food.' 16 Jesus replied, 'There is no need for them to go: give them something to eat yourselves.' 17 But they answered, 'All we have with us is five loaves and two fish.' 18 So he said, 'Bring them here to me.' 19 He gave orders that the people were to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. And breaking the loaves he handed them to his disciples, who gave them to the crowds. 20 They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected the scraps left over, twelve baskets full. 21 Now about five thousand men had eaten, to say nothing of women and children.



c) 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:

All the Evangelists tell the story of the multiplication of the loaves. While Luke and John only tell us of one multiplication of loaves (Lk 9: 10-17; Jn 6: 1-13), Mark and Matthew refer to two occasions of multiplication (Mk 6: 30-44; 8: 1-10; Mt 14: 13-21; 15: 32-39). It seems that both stories in Matthew and Mark came from the one source when loaves were multiplied, but which was passed on in two versions according to different traditions. Besides, the story in Mt 14: 13-21 and Mk 6: 30-44 seem to be the oldest versions. Here we focus on the subject of our *lectio divina*, that is, the text of Mt 14 13-21.

This text presents Jesus at the time when he received the news of the Baptist's beheading by Herod (Mt 14: 12). He goes apart «in a lonely place» (Mt 14, 13). The Gospels often show us Jesus as someone who goes apart. Generally, but not always, this going apart presents a Jesus who is immersed in prayer. Here are some examples: «After sending the people away, he went up a hill by himself to pray. When evening

came, Jesus was there alone» (Mt 14: 23); «Very early in the morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of town to a lonely place, where he prays» (Mk 1: 35); «He would go away to lonely places, where he prayed» (Lk 5: 16); «led by the Spirit» after his baptism, Jesus goes away into the desert to be tempted by the devil and he overcomes the devil's seductions by the power of the Word of God (Mt 4: 1-11; Mk 1: 12-13; Lk 4: 1-13). At other times, Jesus calls with him his disciples: «Let us go off by ourselves to someplace where we will be alone and you can rest a while» (Mk 6: 30-44). In our passage, Jesus prays before multiplying the loaves. The Gospels show that Jesus liked to pray before important events throughout his ministry such as his baptism, his transfiguration and his passion.

This time the crowd follows him in the desert (Mt 14: 13) and Jesus feels compassion for them and cures their sick (Mt 14: 14). We often see compassion in Jesus towards those who follow him (Mt 15: 32). The master is moved because they «were like sheep without a shepherd» (Mk 6: 34). Indeed, Jesus is the good shepherd who nourishes his people like the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 4: 1-7, 42-44) and like Moses in the desert (Ex 16; Nm 11). In John's Gospel, Jesus, in his discourse on the bread of life (Jn 6), explains the meaning of the sign of the multiplication of the loaves. This miracle is a preparation for the bread that will be given in the Eucharist. In all the Gospels, Jesus' actions before he multiplies the loaves, recall the rite of breaking the bread, the Eucharist. The actions are: a) taking the bread, b) lifting «his eyes up to heaven», c) pronouncing «the blessing», d) breaking the bread, e) giving it to the disciples (Mt 14: 19). These actions are found in the stories of the multiplication of the loaves and, word for word, in the story of the last supper (Mt 26: 26).

All eat of the bread and are satisfied. Twelve baskets full of leftovers are taken up. Jesus is the one who satisfies the chosen people of God: Israel, made up of twelve tribes. But he also satisfies the pagans in the second multiplication (Mt 15: 32-39), symbolised now by seven baskets, the number of the nations of Canaan (Acts 13: 19) and also the number of the Hellenist deacons (Acts 6: 5; 21:8) who were given the task of providing for the daily distribution at table. The community gathered around Jesus, a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, welcomed Jews and Gentiles, all called to accept the invitation to share at the table of the Lord. Jesus shows this also by his action of sitting at table with publicans and sinners and, through his teachings in the parables of the banquet where «many will come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of heaven» (Mt 8: 11; see also Mt 22: 34; Lk 14: 16-24).

b) Some questions to guide our meditation and practice:

- What touched you most in this passage?
- Which of Jesus' attitudes touched you most in this text?
- Have you ever thought of Jesus' emotions? This text focuses on compassion. Can you find other emotions in the Gospels?
- What do you think God wishes to tell you through this story of the multiplication of the loaves?
- Jesus provides food in abundance. Do you trust in the providence of the Lord? What does it mean for you to trust in providence?
- Have you ever thought of the Eucharist as sitting down at table with Jesus? Who are those invited to this table?

3. ORATIO

a) Psalm 78, 24-25:

He rained down manna to feed them,
he gave them the wheat of heaven;
mere mortals ate the bread of the Mighty,
he sent them as much food as they could want.

b) Closing prayer:

O God, who in the compassion of your Son towards us, show us your fatherly goodness, grant that the bread multiplied by your providence may be broken in love, and the communion in the bread come down from heaven open us to dialogue with and service of our brothers and sisters. Through Christ our Lord.

4. CONTEMPLATIO

There is one other point which I would like to emphasize, since it significantly affects the authenticity of our communal sharing in the Eucharist. It is the impulse which the Eucharist gives to the community for *a practical commitment to building a more just and fraternal society*. In the Eucharist our God has shown love in the extreme, overturning all those criteria of power which too often govern human relations and radically affirming the criterion of service: “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” (*Mt 9:35*). [...] Can we not make this *Year of the Eucharist* an occasion for diocesan and parish communities to commit themselves in a particular way to responding with fraternal solicitude to one of the many forms of poverty present in our world? I think for example of the tragedy of hunger which plagues hundreds of millions of human beings, the diseases which afflict developing countries, the loneliness of the elderly, the hardships faced by the unemployed, the struggles of immigrants. These are evils which are present - albeit to a different degree - even in areas of immense wealth. We cannot delude ourselves: by our mutual love and, in particular, by our concern for those in need we will be recognized as true followers of Christ (cf. *Jn 13:35; Mt 25:31-46*). This will be the criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations is judged.

John Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, 28.



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

02AUG2020-EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

The glass is still half empty

August is National Water Quality Month, which may not sound exciting, or even like a religious issue. Yet the sacred character of water is attested from the Creation story, in which God's Spirit hovers over the waters, during the corrective flood in Noah's time, at the Red Sea's freedom crossing, up to the cleansing sign of Baptism. Isaiah issues the divine invitation: Come to the water! But what if that water is risky to drink, as it is for some of our nation's citizens and a sizeable percentage of the world population? Support clean water projects, because water is life.

Today's readings:

Isaiah 55:1-3; Romans 8:35, 37-39; Matthew 14:13-21 ([112](#)).

"Thus says the LORD: All you who are thirsty, come to the water!"

03AUG2020

A port for any storm

Jesus' mother Mary has many titles—one of them is Our Lady, Star of the Sea. Under this name, she is a protector of seafarers. But Mary is a guiding star for all of us as we seek her son through the storms of life. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux wrote: "If the winds of temptation arise; if you are driven upon the rocks of tribulation look to the star, call on Mary. If you are tossed upon the waves of pride, of ambition, of envy, of rivalry, look to the star, call on Mary." Don't lose sight of her, and you won't lose your way to Christ.

Today's readings:

Jeremiah 28:1-17 ([407](#)); Matthew 14:22-36 ([408](#)).

"Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

04AUG2020-MEMORIAL OF JOHN VIANNEY, PRIEST

Come to the curer of souls

Most male Catholic saints were priests. Some were priests whose great intellect sparked important theological concepts. Others traveled to exotic places to teach about Christ. Still others died as courageous martyrs. But the French saint John Vianney—commonly known as the Curé of Ars—became a saint simply by being an ordinary, but extraordinarily dedicated, parish priest. In French, the word *curé* means "pastor," or one who is "charged with the care of souls." Vianney cared for thousands of souls who sought spiritual healing in the confessional, where he spent up to 16 hours a day. Seek ordinary ways to be holy today.

Today's readings:

Jeremiah 30:1-2, 12-15, 18-22; Matthew 14:22-36 or 15:1-2, 10-14 ([408](#)).

"People brought to him all those who were sick."

05AUG2020-MEMORIAL OF THE DEDICATION OF THE BASILICA OF SAINT MARY MAJOR

The Word made flesh set in stone

How many papal basilicas are there in Rome? St. Peter's gets primary attention, but actually there are three more, each with its own rich history, including St. Paul Outside the Walls and St. John Lateran. The one whose dedication we celebrate today, St. Mary Major (Santa Maria Maggiore) pays homage to Mary our mother and her role in the life of her son. Pope Sixtus III built this basilica after the Council of Ephesus (431) decreed that Mary is the mother of God incarnate (*Theotokos*). The theology is

important. Once again, the church makes clear that Jesus was both divine and human. Thus, we believe in the sacredness of human life, and we look to Mary's unflinching love, as God-bearer and first disciple, for inspiration.

Today's readings:

Jeremiah 31:1-7; Matthew 15:21-28 ([409](#)).

"With age-old love, I have loved you."

06 AUG 2020-FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD

Shining like the sun

The story of Jesus' Transfiguration is important enough to be part of Matthew, Mark, and Luke's gospels, and the Feast of the Transfiguration has been celebrated since the ninth century and officially on the Roman Catholic calendar since the mid-15th century. This emphasis points toward our deep human longing for transcendence, for a glimpse of divine light such as that experienced by Peter, James, and John. What can you do today to open yourself up to Jesus' light? Perhaps pray for the gift of perception, of receptivity to God's presence.

Today's readings:

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14; 2 Peter 1:16-19; Matthew 17:1-9 ([614](#)).

"And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light."

07 AUG 2020-MEMORIAL OF CAJETAN, PRIEST

Faith takes courage

Since the first followers of Jesus, the church has had its struggles, but always, the Holy Spirit keeps the church faithful. Courageous people in every age rise up to lead renewal within the church. In the early 1500s, that person was Cajetan, who felt the pain of the Body of Christ and dedicated himself to doing something about it. With friends, he founded a group of clergy dedicated to trusting in God's providence and claiming no property nor money from the people—the opposite of clergy at the time who were becoming wealthy off the backs of the people. In time, the same church that Cajetan sought to reform recognized him as a saint. Who are the courageous ones in your life who help you stay faithful? Draw strength from them to help institute necessary reforms in our time.

Today's readings:

Nahum 2:1, 3; 3:1-3, 6-7; Matthew 16:24-28 ([411](#)).

"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny [themselves], take up [their] cross, and follow me."

08 AUG 2020-MEMORIAL OF DOMINIC, PRIEST

Listening is the first step in preaching

Into a 13th-century world where few knew basic theology, and wealthy, mediocre preachers traveled with retinues, Dominic brought dramatic change. He encouraged his friars to study the essentials of the faith, preach eloquently, live simply on what they could beg, and leave enclosed monasteries to reach out to people where they saw the need. By putting himself amid people, Dominic found opportunities to brilliantly counter the Albigensian heresy, a popular dualism that saw spirit as good, matter as evil, and denied the Incarnation. Take time to hear what others are saying so that you are sure to respond as Dominic did with the gospel of love that promotes the dignity of all.

Today's readings:

Habakkuk 1:12—2:4; Matthew 17:14-20 ([412](#)).

"If you have faith the size of a mustard seed . . . nothing will be impossible for you."