

# 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: 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Sunday, August 9, 2020

*Jesus walks on the sea. Matthew 14:22-33*

## 1. Opening prayer

Come Holy Spirit, my life is going through a storm, the egoistic winds impel me where I do not wish to go. I cannot resist their force. I am weak and deprived of strength. You are the energy which gives life. You are my comfort, my force and my cry of prayer. Come, Holy Spirit, reveal to me the meaning of the Scriptures, give me peace anew, serenity and the joy of living.

## 2. Lectio

### a) Key to the reading:

Jesus and His Disciples are on the shore of the lake, at nightfall, after the multiplication of the loaves. Part of the passage is also found in Mark (6:45-52) and in John (6:16-21). The episode of Peter (vv. 28-32) is found only in Matthew. Some commentators hold that it is a question of an appearance of Jesus after the Resurrection (Lk 24:37). The difficulties of the Church and the need for a greater faith in the Risen Jesus are thus foreshadowed.

### b) A possible division of the Text:

Matthew 14:22-23: related to the multiplication of the loaves

Matthew 14:24-27: Jesus walks on the sea

Matthew 14:28-32: the episode of Peter

Matthew 14:33: the profession of faith.

### c) Text:

22 And at once he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he sent the crowds away. 23 After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 while the boat, by now some furlongs from land, was hard pressed by rough waves, for there was a head-wind. 25 In the fourth watch of the night he came towards them, walking on the sea, 26 and when the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. 'It is a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear. 27 But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid.' 28 It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said, 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' 29 Jesus said, 'Come.' Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, 30 but then noticing the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord,' he cried, 'save me!' 31 Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'You have so little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?' 32 And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. 33 The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'



## 3. A Moment of prayerful silence

A desire to keep silence and to listen to God's voice

**Some questions:**

In moments of darkness and interior storms, how do I react? How are the presence and absence of the Lord integrated in me? What place does personal prayer and dialogue with God have in me? What do we ask the Lord in a dark night? A miracle, that He free us from this? A greater faith? In which attitudes am I similar to Peter?

#### **4. Meditatio**

##### **Brief commentary**

*22. And at once He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side while He sent the crowds away.*

The multiplication of the loaves (14:13-21) could have generated in the disciples triumphant expectations concerning the Kingdom of God. Therefore, Jesus orders them at once to get away. He 'obliged', usually a verb of strong significance. The people acclaim Jesus as a Prophet (Jn 6:14-15) and wish to make Him a political ruler. The disciples are easily drawn by this (Mk 6:52; Mt 16:5-12), there is the risk of allowing themselves to be drawn by the enthusiasm of the people. The disciples have to abandon this situation.

*23. After sending the crowds away He went up into the hills by Himself to pray. When evening came He was there alone.*

Jesus finds Himself facing a situation in which the Galilean crowd becomes enthusiastic because of the miracle and runs the risk of not understanding His mission. In this very important moment, Jesus withdraws alone in prayer, as in Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-46).

*24. While the boat, by now some furlongs from land, was hard pressed by rough waves, for there was a head-wind.*

This verse where the boat is noticed, without Jesus, in danger, can be close to verse 32 where the danger ceases when Jesus and Peter get into the boat.

*25. In the fourth watch of the night He came towards them, walking on the sea.*

Jesus appears to His disciples in an extraordinary way. He transcends the human limitations, He has authority over creation. He acts as God alone can (Job 9:8; 38:16).

*26. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea they were terrified. 'It is a ghost', they said, and cried out in fear.*

The disciples were struggling with the contrary wind, they had spent a very stressful day and now a sleepless night. At night (between three and six), in the middle of the sea, they were really terrified in seeing one coming towards them. They did not think of the possibility that it could be Jesus. Their vision is too human, and they believe in ghosts (Lk 24:37). The Risen Lord though, has overcome the force of chaos represented by the waves of the sea.

*27. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying. 'Courage! It is Me! Do not be afraid!'*

The presence of Jesus drives away all fear (9:2, 22). In saying "It is Me" He evokes His identity (Ex 3:14) and manifests the power of God (Mk 14:62; Lk 24:39; Jn 8:58; 18:5-6). Fear is overcome by faith.

*28. It was Peter who answered: 'Lord, he said, 'If it is You, tell me to come to You across the water'.* Peter seems to want still another confirmation of the presence of Jesus. He asks for a sign.

*29. Jesus said, 'Come'. Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water.*

Nevertheless, Peter is ready to run the risk, getting out of the boat and trying to walk on the agitated waves, in the midst of a strong wind (v. 24). He faces the risk of believing in the Word: 'Come'.

*30. But then noticing the wind, he took fright and began to sink: 'Lord', he cried, 'save me!'*

Perseverance is also necessary in the choice of faith. The contrary forces (the wind) are so many, that there is the risk of sinking. The prayer of petition saves him..

31. *Jesus put out His hand at once and held him. 'You have so little faith, He said, 'why did you doubt?'* Peter is not left alone in his weakness. In the storms of Christian life we are not alone. God does not abandon us even if He apparently is absent and does nothing.

32. *And as they got into the boat the wind dropped.*

As soon as Jesus got in the boat the forces of evil cease. The force of hell shall not prevail over it.

33. *The men in the boat bowed down before Him and said: 'Truly, You are the Son of God.'*

Now comes that profession of faith which had been prepared in the preceding episode of the multiplication of the loaves, purified by the experience of getting away from the Bread of eternal life (Jn 6:1-14). Now Peter can also confirm his brothers in faith, after the trial.

## **5. For those who wish to go deeper into the text**

### **Jesus, man of prayer**

Jesus prays in solitude and at night (Mt 14:23; Mk 1:35; Lk 5:16), during the time of meals (Mt 14:19; 15:36; 26:26-27). On the occasion of important events: for Baptism (Lk 3:21), before choosing the twelve (Lk 6:12), before teaching how to pray (Lk 11: 1; Mt 6:5); before the confession at Caesarea (Lk 9:18); in the Transfiguration (Lk 9: 28-29), in Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-44); on the Cross (Mt 27:46; Lk 23:46). He prays for His executioners (Lk 23:34); for Peter (Lk 22:32), for His disciples and for those who will follow Him (Jn 17:9-24). He also prays for Himself (Mt 26:39; Jn 17:1-5; Heb 5:7). He teaches to pray (Mt 6:5), He manifests a permanent relationship with the Father (Mt 11:25-27), sure that He never leaves Him alone (Jn 8:29), and always hears Him (Jn 11:22, 42; Mt 26:53). He has promised (Jn 14:16) to continue to intercede in heaven (Rom 8: 34; Heb 7:25; I Jn 2:1).

## **6. Oratio: Psalm 33**

I will praise Yahweh from my heart;  
let the humble hear and rejoice.

Proclaim with me the greatness of Yahweh,  
let us acclaim His name together.

I seek Yahweh and He answers me,  
frees me from all my fears.

Fix your gaze on Yahweh and your face will grow bright,  
you will never hang your head in shame.

A pauper calls out and Yahweh hears,  
saves him from all his troubles.

The angel of Yahweh encamps around those who fear Him,  
and rescues them.

Taste and see that Yahweh is good.  
How blessed are those who take refuge in Him.

Fear Yahweh, you His holy ones;  
those who fear Him lack for nothing.

## **7. Contemplatio**

Lord Jesus, sometimes we are full of enthusiasm and forget that You are the source of our joy. In the moments of sadness we do not seek You or we want Your miraculous intervention. Now we know that You never abandon us, that we should not fear. Prayer is also our force. Increase our faith. We are ready to risk our life for Your Kingdom.



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

**09AUG**2020 - NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## Ghosts of the past, spirit of the present

Nagasaki was the second and last city to date to endure attack by atomic weapon. In the instant after the bomb's release, 35,000 people were killed, mostly factory workers. Those factories, which supported the Japanese war effort, were the targets of the attack. It all made sense in a war room at the time. After the mushroom cloud clears, however, we have to reckon with the ghosts of our choices. The animated drama, *In This Corner of the World*, offers a moving reflection on the personal cost of these attacks on ordinary Japanese citizens. Pray for all victims of war, and for lasting world peace.

### Today's readings:

1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:22-33 ([115](#)).

*"The disciples saw him walking on the sea. . . . 'It is a ghost,' they said, and they cried out in fear."*

**10AUG**2020 - FEAST OF LAWRENCE, DEACON, MARTYR

## Be inspired by the martyrs among us

Lawrence, a Roman deacon who was martyred in 258, is one of the most venerated of saints, and there are many legends about his gruesome death, which prompted widespread conversions to Christianity in his city. Most Christians aren't called to such spectacular sacrifice, but there are other types of martyrs—ordinary folks in every generation who face adversity with total commitment to God and sow the seeds of faith all around them. They are martyrs at the hands of disease, hatred, bigotry, selfishness, and cruelty. They fight the good fight and leave us all the better for it. Pray for that level of faith and perseverance.

### Today's readings:

2 Corinthians 9:6-10; John 12:24-26 ([618](#)).

*"Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life."*

**11AUG**2020 - MEMORIAL OF CLARE, VIRGIN

## We are what we love

Those who enter consecrated life in the Catholic Church make at least three vows—of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Known as the Evangelical Counsels, the vows are meant to shield disciples from greed, lust, and pride. For most religious orders, poverty is simply a commitment to shared (rather than individual) ownership. But Clare of Assisi, among the first followers of Saint Francis and the first woman known to write a set of monastic guidelines, made sure her order of Poor Clares owned nothing at all. "We become what we love," she wrote. "If we love things, we become a thing." In honor of Clare, take some time to examine what you love and what you own to see whether anything is hampering your spiritual life.

### Today's readings:

Ezekiel 2:8-3:4; Matthew 18:1-5, 10, 12-14 ([414](#)).

*"Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest."*

**12AUG**2020

## Get engaged

One of the seven themes of Catholic social teaching—Call to Family, Community, and Participation—asserts that we have a right and a responsibility to participate in society and to seek the common good, taking special care of the poor and vulnerable. Since 1999, the United Nations has set aside August 12 as International Youth Day to celebrate and enhance the global efforts of youth to build a better world. This year’s theme is “Youth Engagement for Global Action,” and we’ve certainly seen evidence of that in recent street protests. What are you doing to engage youth? Offer young people you know a call to action—or better yet—respond to the call they offer you.

**Today's readings:**

Ezekiel 9:1-7; 10:18-22; Matthew 18:15-20 ([415](#)).

*“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst.”*

## 13 AUG 2020 - MEMORIAL OF PONTIAN, POPE, AND HIPPOLYTUS, PRIEST, MARTYRS

### Bring them out of exile

Today’s saints—Pontian and Hippolytus—endured exile together. They were forced by third-century Roman emperor Maximinus to work in the mines of the island of Sardinia and eventually perished there. Formerly, they had been a pope (Pontian) and theologian (Hippolytus). The church advocates at many levels for migrants who have been exiled from their homeland by war, poverty, or persecution. In homage to exiles across the centuries, consider taking a step today to aid migrants in your region of the world.

**Today's readings:**

Ezekiel 12:1-12; Matthew 18:21—19:1 ([416](#)).

*“‘Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.’”*

## 14 AUG 2020 - MEMORIAL OF MAXIMILIAN KOLBE, PRIEST, MARTYR

### Witness to the world

Many young Catholics may have had the opportunity to read the comic book “Soldier of God,” about the life of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, who was killed in the Auschwitz concentration camp. It begins: “This is a true story of a real flesh-and-blood hero of God.” Young readers were captivated, and most could not forget the images of Maximilian volunteering to take the place of a man who was selected to be killed. “Would I do that?” is an instinctive question when faced with such powerful witness. Not all are called to martyrdom, but each Christian commits to being an example of God’s deep love and care for people, especially the most vulnerable. “How can I be God’s witness?” is a good question to ask yourself each day.

**Today's readings:**

Ezekiel 16:1-15, 60, 63 or 16:59-63; Matthew 19:3-12 ([417](#)).

*“Live in your blood and grow like a plant in the field.”*

## 15 AUG 2020 - SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

### Hidden glory revealed

Mary, now united totally with her son, with whom she suffered excruciating ordeals, shows us how suffering transforms to glory. She gathers all her human children close in this season of harvest, her bounteous fruits and flowers. Today’s gospel shows Elizabeth affirming in Mary a vigor and holiness, mirroring God’s, that she herself might not have recognized. This feast points to the same glory in each of us, perhaps hard to believe, but still hidden, vital, intact.

**Today's readings:**

Day: Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; 1 Corinthians 15:20-27; Luke 1:39-56 ([622](#)).

*“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”*