

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

Sunday, October 17, 2021

*29th Sunday of
Ordinary Time*

Opening Prayer

God of peace and forgiveness, You have given us Christ as an example of total service, even to giving us His very life; grant us to find favor in Your sight that we may share the cup of Your will to its dregs and live in the generous and fruitful service of each other.

Reading

The Context:

This episode comes straight after the third prediction of the Passion (Mk 10: 32-34). As on the occasions of the other predictions, the disciples' reaction is not positive: two of them

are worried about who is going to be first in the Kingdom and the others become indignant. This tells us that the disciples had difficulty accepting the painful destiny of their Master and understanding the mystery of the Kingdom. The two who come with a request – James and John – are brothers and are part of the group of friends of Jesus (Mk 1: 19-20). Their nickname is *boanerges* ("sons of thunder" Mk 3: 17). They were a little impetuous.

The Text:

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." He replied, "What do you wish me to do for you?" They answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" They said to him, "We can." Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared." When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John. Jesus summoned them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

A Moment of Silent Prayer

to re-read the text with our heart and to recognize in the words and structure, the presence of the mystery of the living God.

Some Questions

to see the important points in the text and begin to assimilate them.

- Why were the disciples so anxious to take the first places?
- Does Jesus' reply make sense?
- What does Jesus mean by the cup to drink and the baptism to be baptized?
- On what does Jesus base service in the community?

Some Deepening of the Reading

"Grant us to sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your glory"

Even though they were careful in the way they phrased their question, they were quite ambitious. According to tradition, they may have been cousins of Jesus, and therefore – according to Eastern law – they had a special right, as members of the family. In any case, it is clear they have understood nothing about what Jesus was about to do. He was on the way to the ignominy of the cross, and they still had not understood Him. Jesus' true power did not consist in distributing places of honor, but in asking them to share His tragic destiny: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?"

"The cup that I drink you will drink"

The dialogue concerning the cup and the baptism (vv. 38-39) is obviously parallel. But it is not easy to understand how the two disciples can drink the cup and be baptized, unless one thinks of the martyrdom both of them suffered later. By these two images, Jesus seems to evoke His violent death, which He foretells as an absolute obligation of fidelity to the Father. The reply to their request to sit next to Him is evasive: but we can understand that it means that their way is not the right way to obtain the request.

“The ten began to be indignant”

Clearly they too share the same ambition. However, this verse seems to be an editorial addition to connect two episodes, which originally were not placed together. This changes the subject completely. But the fact that their indignation is recorded is probably based on some other episode where the disciples do not appear in a good light and is therefore authentic.

“Those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them... But it shall not be so among you”

Jesus is referring to political leaders of His time, and really this is also the style of political leadership in all times. On the other hand, the community of disciples must be ruled by service. Two terms express this service in a gradual manner. Jesus first speaks of “servant” (*diakonos*) and then of “slave” (*doulos*). One cannot choose whom one will serve: one must be a slave of all, thus overturning the worldly order.

“For the Son of man also...”

Here we find the basis of the constitutional law of the community: to follow the Master's style, by giving, like Him, one's life in the spirit of service; thus becoming truly “lords” through the gift of one's life, not by just pretending. It is difficult to interpret “ransom” or redemption, as Fr. X. Léon Dufour says, we can understand this well when we reflect on the words that Jesus speaks at the Last Supper. Then Jesus' whole life appears in the light of “ransom,” of fidelity to the very end for the freedom of humankind. He deprives Himself of freedom so that He can give freedom, to ransom those who have no freedom. Thus, the statutes of the community of disciples is characterized by service, by a lack of ambition, by a life given and destined for the ransom of others.

Psalm 33 (32)

A Prayer for Justice and Peace

Sing to Him a new song, play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

For the word of the Lord is upright; and all His work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of His mouth.

He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle; He put the deeps in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him!
For He spoke, and it came to be;

He commanded, and it stood firm.

The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom He has chosen as His heritage! The Lord looks down from heaven,

He sees all the sons of men; from where He sits enthroned

He looks forth on all the inhabitants of the earth, He who fashions the hearts of them all,
and observes all their deeds.

Closing Prayer

Lord our God, keep Your Son's disciples from the easy ways of popularity, of cheap glory, and lead them to the ways of the poor and scourged of the earth, so that they may recognize in their faces the face of the Master and Redeemer. Give them eyes to see possible ways of peace and solidarity; ears to hear the requests for meaning and salvation of so many people who seek; enrich their hearts with generous fidelity and a sensitivity and understanding so that they may walk along the way and be true and sincere witnesses to the glory that shines in the crucified resurrected and victorious One. Who lives and reigns gloriously with You, Father, forever and ever. Amen.



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

17 OCT 2021 - TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Come face-to-face with Jesus

Spiritual truths often sound mysterious and paradoxical. God is a Trinity; Jesus is human and divine; the last will be first. But not everything in the life of faith is a mystery. Take poverty. It's where Jesus said we'd always see him face to face. Poverty's roots are well understood: malnutrition, limited healthcare, unsafe housing, dangerous work conditions, unequal access to justice, and no political voice. In founding today's Poverty Eradication Day, French priest Joseph Wresinski dared us to rewrite these terms of modern civilization. Pray the Rosary's Sorrowful Mysteries and commit to undercutting poverty's roots.

Today's readings:

Isaiah 53:10-11; Hebrews 4:14-16; Mark 10:35-45 (146).

"Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant."

18 OCT 2021 - FEAST OF LUKE, EVANGELIST

First in line for Marian devotion

As the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, Luke the Evangelist penned over a quarter of the New Testament—more than anyone else. The Virgin Mary has a special place in his gospel—it is only here that we find the story of the Annunciation, her visit to Elizabeth, the Presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple, and the finding of the child Jesus preaching in the temple. In art, Luke is sometimes depicted painting images of Mary (and he is the patron saint of painters). Revisit the richness of what we know about Mary thanks to Luke by giving his gospel another good read.

Today's readings:

2 Timothy 4:10-17b; Luke 10:1-9 (661).

"The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

19 OCT 2021 - MEMORIAL OF JOHN DE BRÉBEUF AND ISAAC JOGUES, PRIESTS, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

Learn the language of God's love

In 1642, Jesuit missionary John de Brébeuf penned "The Huron Carol." Drawing from the experience of indigenous Americans, it lauds a babe born into modest means—wrapped in a "ragged robe of rabbit skin." Instead of shepherds and Magi, Native American hunters and chiefs arrive to pay homage to "Jesus, your King." While the famous Canadian carol comes under some cultural scrutiny in modern times, it also gets credit for preserving the Huron/Wendat language it was written in. Mostly, it reminds us to speak other people's languages—figuratively, if not literally—when sharing the Good News.

Today's readings:

Romans 5:12, 15b, 17-19, 20b-21; Luke 12:35-38 (474).

"Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more."

20 OCT 2021 - MEMORIAL OF PAUL OF THE CROSS, PRIEST

Need some passion in your life?

"Passion" is a fiery word with various meanings, from an intense love relationship to an activity that we give our all to. Christians also have a unique understanding of "passion" as the suffering and death of Jesus. Saint Paul of the Cross was so fired up by this that he founded a religious community dedicated to the Passion of Jesus. But wait

a minute, how did we get from intense love to suffering? Paul makes the connection for us—the Passion is about Jesus' great love, a love so great that he was willing to suffer and die for us. Take a moment to reflect anew what you live—or would die—passionately for.

Today's readings:

Romans 6:12-18; Luke 12:39-48 (475).

"But thanks be to God that . . . you have become obedient from the heart."

21OCT₂₀₂₁

God at work

Summer vacations are now a faded memory as workplaces and schools operate at full swing. The Catholic Church has a rich tradition of seeing work as more than a necessity and duty. Through work we transform nature—a creative act, just as God's ongoing creation of the world is a creative act. A job that contributes to well-being can also be a path toward personal fulfillment. Whatever your work involves today, offer it up to God and take note of how God is able to work through you.

Today's readings:

Romans 6:19-23; Luke 12:49-53 (476).

"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!"

22OCT₂₀₂₁ - MEMORIAL OF JOHN PAUL II, POPE

Reasonable faith

In this era of "alternative facts," it is challenging to find the truth. Saint John Paul II gave us good counsel on seeking truth. In the encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* ("Faith and Reason") he wrote, ". . . believers do not surrender. They can continue on their way to the truth because they are certain that God has created them 'explorers,' whose mission it is to leave no stone unturned, though the temptation to doubt is always there. Leaning on God, they continue to reach out, always and everywhere, for all that is beautiful, good and true." How might you be an "explorer" in situations where truth is difficult to find?

Today's readings:

Romans 7:18-25a; Luke 12:54-59 (477).

"Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?"

23OCT₂₀₂₁ - MEMORIAL OF JOHN OF CAPISTRANO, PRIEST

You get as good as you give

Jesus, his disciples, and the early evangelists were all clear about one thing: "the wages of sin is death." Beyond physical death, the selfishness of sin cuts off our relationship with God and the opportunity for true peace and joy. Paying attention to the needs of others as well as yourself keeps us alive in Christ. Study after study shows that happiness comes from social connectedness and a spirit of generosity. Franciscan Saint John Capistrano says of the faithful: "The brightness of their wisdom must make them like the light of the world that brings light to others." Ponder the ways that you can acquire wisdom to share with others.

Today's readings:

Romans 8:1-11; Luke 13:1-9 (478).

"The concern of the flesh is death, but the concern of the spirit is life and peace."