

# 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, February 28, 2021

*Second Sunday of Lent*

### 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 in us silence 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 from 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 to us the Father and sent us your Spirit. Amen.

### Reading

- **A key to the reading:**

On this second Sunday of Lent, the Church meditates on the Transfiguration of Jesus in the presence of the three disciples who joined him on the mountain. The Transfiguration takes place after the first announcement of the death of Jesus (Lk 9: 21-22). This announcement had confused the disciples and especially Peter. When we take a close look at the small details, we see that the text describes the transfiguration in a way that makes us aware of how this unusual experience of Jesus was able to help the disciples overcome the crisis in which they found themselves. As we read, let us try to pay attention to the following: "How did the transfiguration take place and what was the reaction of the disciples towards this experience?"

- **A division of the text to help our reading:**

- o Mark 9: 2-4: The Transfiguration of Jesus in the presence of his disciples
- o Mark 9: 5-6: Peter's reaction to the transfiguration
- o Mark 9: 7-8: The voice from heaven that explains the meaning of the Transfiguration

- o Mark 9: 9-10: Keeping secret what they had seen

- **Text:**

<sup>2</sup> Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain on their own by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured<sup>3</sup> his clothes became brilliantly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them. <sup>4</sup> Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking to Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Then Peter spoke to Jesus, 'Rabbi,' he said, 'it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' <sup>6</sup> He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. <sup>7</sup> And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.' <sup>8</sup> Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them anymore but only Jesus. <sup>9</sup> As they were coming down from the mountain he warned them to tell no one what they had seen, until after the Son of man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> They observed the warning faithfully, though among themselves they discussed what 'rising from the dead' could mean.

## A moment of prayerful silence

*so that the Word of God may penetrate and enlighten our life.*

## Some questions

*to help us in our personal reflection.*

- Which part of the text did you like most or that touched you most? Why?
- How does the transfiguration take place and what is the reaction of the disciples to this experience?
- Why does the text present Jesus with brilliant clothes while he is speaking with Moses and Elijah? Who are Moses and Elijah for Jesus? Who are they for the disciples?
- What is the message of the voice from heaven for Jesus? And what is the message for the disciples?
- How can we *transfigure*, today, our personal and family life and the life of the community in our area?

## For those who wish to go deeper into the theme

- **The context then and now**

The foretelling of the passion sank the disciples into a deep crisis. They lived among the poor, but in their minds, they were confused, lost as they were in the propaganda of the government and of the official religion of their time (Mk 8: 15). The official religion taught that the Messiah would be glorious and victorious! That

is why Peter reacts strongly against the cross (Mk 8: 32). Someone condemned to die on the cross could not be the Messiah, rather, according to the Law of God, he had to be considered "cursed by God" (Dt 21: 22-23). In these circumstances, the experience of the Transfiguration of Jesus was able to help the disciples overcome the trauma of the Cross. In fact, at the Transfiguration, Jesus appears in glory and speaks with Moses and Elijah of his Passion and Death (Lk 9: 31). The journey towards glory, then, is through the cross.

In the 70's, when Mark is writing his Gospel, the Cross was a great obstacle for the Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah. How could it be that one crucified, one who died as one marginalized, was the great Messiah expected for centuries by the people? The cross was an obstacle to believing in Jesus. "The cross is a scandal," they said (1 Cor 1: 23). The community did not know how to respond to the critical questions put to them by the Jews. One of the great efforts of the early Christians was that of assisting people to see that the cross was neither scandal nor madness, but rather the expression of the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1: 22-31). Mark's Gospel contributes to that effort. He uses texts from the Old Testament to describe the scene of the Transfiguration. He shed light on the events of the life of Jesus and shows that Jesus fulfils the prophecies and that the Cross is the way that leads to Glory. It was not just the cross of Jesus that was a problem! In the 70's, the cross of persecution was part of every-day life for Christians. In fact, just a little time before, Nero had launched his persecution and many died. Today too, many people suffer because they are Christians and because they live the Gospel. How do we approach the cross? What does it mean? With these questions in mind we meditate and comment on the text of the transfiguration.

- **A commentary on the text:**

- **Mark 9: 2-4: *Jesus looks different.***

Jesus goes up a high mountain. Luke adds that he goes there to pray (Lk 9: 28). There, on the summit of the mountain, Jesus appears in *glory* in the presence of Peter, James and John. Together with him appear Moses and Elijah. The high mountain recalls Mount Sinai, where in times past, God had made known his will to the people by presenting the law to Moses. The white clothes of Jesus recall Moses shrouded in light as he speaks to God on the Mountain and as he receives the law from God (cf. Ex 34: 29-35). Elijah and Moses, the two great authorities of the Old Testament, speak with Jesus. Moses represents the Law and Elijah the prophets. Luke says that they talked about the Death of Jesus in Jerusalem (Lk 9: 31). Thus, it was clear that the Old Testament, both the Law and the Prophets, taught that the way to glory is through the cross (Cf Is 53).

- **Mark 9: 5-6: *Peter likes what is happening but does not understand.***

Peter likes what is going on and wants this pleasing moment on the Mountain to last. He suggests building three tents. Mark says that Peter was afraid and did not know what he was saying, and Luke adds that the disciples were sleepy (Lk 9: 32). For them, as it is for us, it is difficult to understand the Cross!

The description of the transfiguration begins with an affirmation: "Six days later." What six days are these? Some scholars explain this phrase thus: Peter wants to build three tents, because it was the *sixth day* of the feast of tents. This was a very popular feast of six days that celebrated the gift of the Law of God and the forty years spent in the desert. To recall these forty years, the people had to spend six days in temporary tents. That is why it was called the Feast of the Tents. If they could not celebrate the whole six days, they had to celebrate at least the sixth day. The affirmation "six days later" would then be an allusion to the feast of the tents. That is why Peter recalls the duty of building tents. And spontaneously, he offers himself to build the tents. Thus Jesus, Moses and Elijah would have been able to go on talking.

o **Mark 9: 7: The voice from heaven shed light on the events.**

As soon as Jesus is shrouded in glory, a voice from heaven says: "This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him!" The expression "Beloved Son" recalls the figure of the *Servant* Messiah, proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah (cf. Is 42: 1). The expression "Listen to him" recalls the prophecy that promised the coming of the new Moses (cf. Dt 18: 15). In Jesus, the prophecies of the Old Testament are being fulfilled. The disciples could not doubt this. The Christians of the 70's could not doubt this. Jesus is truly the *glorious* Messiah, but the way to glory is through the cross, the second proclamation made in the prophecy of the *Servant* (Is 53: 3-9). The glory of the Transfiguration is proof of this. Moses and Elijah confirm this. The Father is the guarantor of this. Jesus accepts this.

o **Mark 9: 8: Only Jesus and no one else!**

Mark says that after the vision, the disciples see only Jesus and no one else. The emphasis on the affirmation that they see only Jesus suggests that from now on Jesus is the only revelation of God for us! For us Christians, Jesus, and only Jesus, is the key to understanding the complete meaning of the Old Testament.

o **Mark 9: 9-10: Knowing how to keep silent.**

Jesus asks his disciples not to say anything to anyone until he would have risen from the dead, but the disciples do not understand him. Indeed, anyone who does not link suffering to the resurrection, does not understand the meaning of the Cross. Jesus is stronger than death.

o **Mark 9: 11-13: The return of the prophet Elijah.**

The prophet Malachi had proclaimed that Elijah was to return to prepare the way of the Messiah (Mal 3: 23-24). This same proclamation is also found in the book of Ecclesiastes (Eccl 48: 10). Then, how could Jesus be the Messiah if Elijah had not returned yet? That is why the disciples asked: "Why do the Scribes say that Elijah must come first?" (9: 11). Jesus' reply is clear: "I tell you that Elijah has come and they have treated him as they pleased, just as the scriptures say about him" (9: 13). Jesus was referring to John the Baptist who was murdered by Herod (Mt 17: 13).

- **Further information:**

- **The Transfiguration: the change that takes place in the practice of Jesus**

In the middle of conflicts with the Pharisees and Herodians (Mk 8: 11-21), Jesus leaves Galilee and goes to the region of Caesarea Philippi (Mk 8: 27), where he begins to prepare his disciples. On the way, he puts a question to them: "Who do people say I am?" (Mk 8: 27) After listening to their reply that they considered him the Messiah, Jesus begins to speak of his passion and death (Mk 8: 31). Peter reacts: "Heaven preserve you, Lord!" (Mt 16: 22). Jesus replies: "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because you are thinking not as God thinks but as human beings do!" (Mk 8: 33) This was a moment of crisis for the disciples, who still held on to the thought of a glorious Messiah (Mk 8: 32-33; 9: 32), not understanding Jesus' reply and trying to divert it in another direction. It was close to the feast of the Tents, (cf Lk 9: 33), when the popular messianic expectation was much stronger than usual. Jesus goes up the mountain to pray (Lk 9: 28). He overcomes temptation by prayer. The revelation of the Kingdom was different from that which the people imagined. The victory of the Servant would take place through the death sentence (Is 50: 4-9; 53: 1-12). The cross appears on the horizon, not just as a possibility, but as a certainty. From this moment on a change takes place in Jesus' practice. Here are some important signs of this change:

- Few miracles. At first there are many miracles. Now, beginning with Mk 8: 27; Mt 16: 13 and Lk 9: 18, miracles are almost an exception in Jesus' activities.
- Proclaiming the Passion. Earlier there was talk of the passion as a remote possibility (Mk 3:6). Now there is constant talk of it (Mk 8: 31; 9: 9, 31; 10: 33, 38).
- Taking up the Cross. Earlier, Jesus proclaimed the imminent coming of the Kingdom. Now he insists on watchfulness, the demands on those who follow him and the necessity to take up one's cross (Mt 16: 24-26; 19: 27-30; 24: 42-51; 25: 1-13; Mk 8: 34; 10: 28-31; Lk 9: 23-26, 57-62; 12: 8-9, 35-48; 14: 25-33; 17: 33; 18: 28-30).
- He teaches the disciples. Earlier he taught the people. Now he is more concerned with the formation of his disciples. He asks them to choose again (Jn 6: 67) and begins to prepare them for the future mission. He goes out of the city so as to stay with them and busy himself with their formation (Mk 8: 27; 9: 28, 30-35; 10: 10, 23, 28-32; 11: 11).

Different parables. Earlier, the parables revealed the mystery of the Kingdom present in the activities of Jesus. Now the parables tend towards the future judgement, at the end of time: the murderous vine growers (Mt 21: 33-46); the merciless servant (Mt 18: 23-35), the workers of the eleventh hour (Mt 20: 1-16), the two sons (Mt 21: 28-32), the wedding banquet (Mt 22: 1-14), the ten talents (Mt 25: 14-30).

Jesus accepts the will of the Father that is revealed in the new situation and decides to go to Jerusalem (Lk 9: 51). He takes this decision with such

determination as to frighten his disciples, who cannot understand what is going on (Mk 10: 32; Lk 18: 31-34). In the society of that time, the proclamation of the Kingdom as Jesus proclaimed it, could not be tolerated. So, either he had to change or he had to die! Jesus did not change his proclamation. He continued to be faithful to the Father and to the poor. That is why he was sentenced to death!

- **The transfiguration and the return of the prophet Elijah**

In Mark's Gospel, the scene of the transfiguration is linked to the question of the return of the prophet Elijah (Mk 9: 9-13). In those days, people expected the return of the prophet Elijah and were not aware that Elijah had already returned in the person of John the Baptist (Mk 9: 13). The same thing happens today. Many people live in expectation of the return of Jesus and even write on the walls of cities: *Jesus will return!* They are not aware that Jesus is already present in our lives. Every now and then, like an unexpected flash of lightning, this presence of Jesus breaks out and shines, transforming our lives. A question that each one of us should ask is: Has my faith in Jesus offered me a moment of transfiguration and intense joy? How have such moments of joy given me strength in moments of difficulties?

## The prayer of a Psalm: Psalm 27 (26)

### **The Lord is my light**

Yahweh is my light and my salvation,  
whom should I fear?

Yahweh is the fortress of my life,  
whom should I dread?

When the wicked advance against me to eat me up,  
they, my opponents, my enemies,  
are the ones who stumble and fall.

Though an army pitch camp against me,  
my heart will not fear,  
though war break out against me,  
my trust will never be shaken.

One thing I ask of Yahweh,  
one thing I seek:  
to dwell in Yahweh's house all the days of my life,  
to enjoy the sweetness of Yahweh,  
to seek out his temple.

For he hides me away under his roof on the day of evil,  
he folds me in the recesses of his tent,  
sets me high on a rock.  
Now my head is held high above the enemies who surround me;  
in his tent I will offer sacrifices of acclaim. I will sing,

I will make music for Yahweh.

Yahweh, hear my voice as I cry,

pity me, answer me!

Of you my heart has said,

'Seek his face!'

Your face, Yahweh, I seek;

do not turn away from me.

Do not thrust aside your servant in anger,

without you I am helpless.

Never leave me, never forsake me,

God, my Savior.

Though my father and mother forsake me,

Yahweh will gather me up.

Yahweh, teach me your way,

lead me on the path of integrity because of my enemies;

do not abandon me to the will of my foes

- false witnesses have risen against me,

and are breathing out violence.

This I believe: I shall see the goodness of Yahweh,

in the land of the living.

Put your hope in Yahweh,

be strong,

let your heart be bold,

put your hope in Yahweh.

## Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank 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 that which 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.*

**28 FEB**2021 - SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

## Go all in

Erin became a Roman Catholic in midlife. When asked why, she says she tried fiercely to make life work according to her plan. Erin told God many times how it should go, attempting to persuade the powers that be to see it her way. Then one day God replied: My plan for you is so beautiful, wonderful, elegant. Why not try it instead? When Erin celebrated the Rites for Candidates for Full Communion on a Lenten Sunday just like this one, she found the joy she was missing. Pray for this year's candidates—and for candidates for years to come.

### Today's readings:

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Romans 8:31b-34; Mark 9:2-10 ([26](#)).

*"If God is for us, who can be against us?"*

**01 MAR**2021 - LENTEN WEEKDAY

## Mercy me!

Pope Francis called mercy the "beating heart of the gospel." Mercy is forbearance, divine favor, compassionate treatment of the distressed and undeserving. It's another word for God's love. Consider showing devotion to it by reciting the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, a rosary-based prayer that was received by Saint Faustina, a Polish nun in the 1930s, through visions of Jesus. Divine Mercy Sunday is celebrated the week after Easter, but many make the Chaplet part of their regular Lenten practice by reciting it every day at 3 p.m. (the traditional hour of Christ's death). You can find the Chaplet on the [USCCB website](#).

### Today's readings:

Daniel 9:4b-10; Luke 6:36-38 ([230](#)).

*"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."*

**02 MAR**2021 - LENTEN WEEKDAY

## Celebrate humble history

Women's History Month celebrates well-known women but also unsung heroines. How appropriate, then, that today is the feast of Agnes of Bohemia, a lesser-known saint. First cousin of Elizabeth of Hungary—and descendent of Good King Wenceslaus—Agnes came upon her vocation naturally. She built a hospital for the poor, a Franciscan friary, and a monastery for Poor Clare nuns. When she also became a nun and was urged to become abbess, she referred to herself only as "senior sister." She continued to cook for her sisters and mend the clothing of lepers rather than live a royal life. Celebrate the unsung heroines in your life.

### Today's readings:

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Matthew 23:1-12 ([231](#)).

*"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."*

**03 MAR**2021 - MEMORIAL OF KATHARINE DREXEL, RELIGIOUS FOUNDER

## We have work to do

Katharine Drexel (1858-1955) is a saint for our time. Born into a successful Philadelphia banking family, she used her wealth to improve the lives of others. Her Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament devoted their lives to

education of Native and African Americans, building more than 100 schools in cities, rural areas, and on reservations. Though Katharine and her sisters at times faced criticism, endured racist taunts, and were threatened by the Ku Klux Klan, they remained steadfast in their mission. Patron saint of racial justice and philanthropy, Saint Katharine epitomizes the sacrifice of the Blessed Sacrament. How will you commit your own life to making the world more just?

**Today's readings:**

Jeremiah 18:18-20; Matthew 20:17-28 ([232](#)).

*“Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?”*

## 04MAR2021 - MEMORIAL OF CASIMIR

### Grace under pressure

Saint Casimir seemed destined for riches and power, but this patron saint of Poland, called the Peacemaker, took a different path. Born in 1458 to the king and queen of Poland, he was a devout, ascetic child. At age 14 his father had him lead an army to install himself as king of Hungary, but with an overpowering enemy and troops beginning to desert, Casimir instead returned home. His furious father exiled him, but Casimir would never again take up arms. Rejecting violence when those around you embrace it can take great inner strength. Cultivate an inner compass that can pursue peace despite pressure.

**Today's readings:**

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Luke 16:19-31 ([233](#)).

*“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose hope is the LORD.”*

## 05MAR2021 - LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

### Pray for besieged people everywhere

Prayer is our life with God. Sometimes we carve out a particular time during the day, and sometimes there are specific words, images, or experiences that help us be more aware of or express our relationship with God. And so of course during Lent prayer is one of the pillars, along with fasting and almsgiving, that help us turn to God. On today's 2021 [World Day of Prayer](#), an ecumenical observance, we are invited to “Build on a strong foundation.” This theme comes from the women of Vanuatu, an island hit by Cyclone Harold in 2020. Despite the perils they faced—and we've all faced in a year of pandemic—the message of today's prayer is one of confidence in God's steadfastness and the rock of faith. Unite in prayer for healing and recovery.

**Today's readings:**

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46 ([234](#)).

*“The kingdom of God will be . . . given to a people that will produce its fruit.”*

## 06MAR2021 - LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Sibling rivalry of biblical proportions

The Parable of the Prodigal Son could as easily be called the Parable of the Bitter Brother. The story might have ended with the celebration at the return of the repentant prodigal. But instead we are left to ponder the feelings of the “good son,” the obedient one who followed all the rules but never got a party thrown in *his* honor. It's a very human story, reenacted in nearly every family in one form or another. “Mother always liked you best.” “You were Dad's favorite.” “All we ever did was bail you out of trouble.” Will the bitter brother in the gospel story reconcile? Has bitterness or division in your own family been reconciled? Consider being the reconciler who brings it about.

**Today's readings:**

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32 ([235](#)).

*“Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends.”*