

# 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 Devina

## Sunday, August 1, 2021

*18th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Jesus is the Bread of Life.*

### 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.

### Gospel Reading – John 6: 24-35

#### **A key to the reading:**

The discourse of the Bread of Life is not a text to be discussed and dissected, but rather it should be meditated and pondered. Therefore, even if it is not fully understood, we should not be concerned. This text of the Bread of Life demands a whole life to meditate on it and deepen it. People have to read such a text, meditate on it, pray over it, think about it, read it again, repeat it, and ponder it, as one does with a candy in the mouth. We repeatedly turn it in the mouth until it is finished. The one who reads the fourth Gospel superficially may have the impression that John always repeats the same thing. Reading it more attentively, one becomes aware that it is not a question of repetition. The author of the fourth Gospel has his own way of repeating the same theme, but always at a higher and more profound level. It seems to be like a winding staircase. By turning, one reaches the same place, but always at a higher or a more profound level.

#### **A Division of Chapter Six:**

It is good to keep in mind the division of the chapter to understand better its significance:

- John 6: 1-15: the great multiplication of the loaves;
- John 6: 16-21: the crossing of the lake and Jesus who walks on the water;
- John 6: 22-71: the dialogue of Jesus with the people, with the Jews, and with the disciples.

- 1st dialogue: 6: 22-27 with the people: the people seek Jesus and find him in Capernaum;
- 2nd dialogue: 6: 28-34 with the people: faith as the work of God and the manna of the desert;
- 3rd dialogue: 6: 35-40 with the people: the true bread is to do God's will;
- 4th dialogue: 6: 41-51 with the Jews: the complaining of the Jews;
- 5th dialogue: 6: 52-58 with the Jews: Jesus and the Jews;
- 6th dialogue: 6: 59-66 with the disciples: reaction of the disciples;
- 7th dialogue: 6: 67-71 with the disciples: confession of Peter.

### **The Text: John 6: 24-35**

When the people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into those boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they found him on the other side, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?'

Jesus answered: In all truth I tell you, you are looking for me not because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that goes bad, but work for food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of man will give you, for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal.

Then they said to him, 'What must we do if we are to carry out God's work?' Jesus gave them this answer, 'This is carrying out God's work: you must believe in the one he has sent.'

So they said, 'What sign will you yourself do, the sight of which will make us believe in you? What work will you do? Our fathers ate manna in the desert; as Scripture says: He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'

Jesus answered them: In all truth I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is the bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

'Sir,' they said, 'give us that bread always.' Jesus answered them: I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me will ever hunger; no one who believes in me will ever thirst.

## 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.**

- The people were hungry, so they eat the bread and then they look for more bread. They seek the miracle and do not seek the sign of God who was hidden in that. What do I seek more in my life: the miracle or the sign?
- Hungry for bread, hungry for God. Which of these two is most important for me?
- Jesus says: "I am the bread of life." He takes away hunger and thirst. Which of these experiences do I have in my life?
- Keep silence within you for a moment and ask yourself: "To believe in Jesus: What does this mean for me concretely in my daily life?"

## Deeper into the Theme

### **Context:**

In today's Gospel we begin the Discourse on the Bread of Life (Jn 6: 22-71). After the multiplication of the loaves, the people follow Jesus. They had seen the miracle; they had eaten and were satiated and wanted more! They were not concerned about looking for the sign or the call of God that was contained in all of this. When the people found Jesus in the Synagogue of Capernaum, he had a long conversation with them, called the Discourse of the Bread of Life. It is not really a discourse, but a series of seven brief dialogues which explain the meaning of the multiplication of the bread, symbol of the new Exodus and of the Eucharistic Supper.

The conversation of Jesus with the people, with the Jews, and with the disciples is a beautiful dialogue, but a demanding one. Jesus tries to open the eyes of the people in a way that they will learn to read the events and discover in themselves the turning point that life should take. It is not enough to follow miraculous signs which multiply the bread for the body. Man does not live by bread alone. The struggle for life without mysticism does not reach the roots. The people, while speaking with Jesus, always remain more annoyed or upset by his words. But Jesus does not give in. Nor does he change the exigencies. The discourse seems to be a funnel. As the conversation progresses, less people remain with Jesus. At the end only the twelve remain but Jesus cannot trust those twelve either! Today the same thing occurs. When the Gospel begins to demand commitment, many people withdraw and go away.

## Commentary on the Text

- John 6: 24-27: People look for Jesus because they want more bread. They follow Jesus. They see that he did not go into the boat with the disciples, and, because of this, they do not understand what he had done to reach Capernaum. They did not even understand the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. People see what has happened, but they cannot understand all this as a sign of something more

profound. They stop on the surface, being satisfied with the food. They look for bread and life, but only for the sake of their body. According to the people, Jesus does what Moses had done in the past: to feed all the people in the desert. According to Jesus, they wanted the past to be repeated. But Jesus asks the people to take an additional step and advance. Besides working for the bread that perishes, they should work for the imperishable food. This new food will be given by the Son of Man, indicated by God himself. He brings life which lasts forever. He opens for us a new horizon on the sense of life and on God.

- John 6: 28-29: "Which is God's work?" The people ask: what should we do to carry out this work of God? Jesus answers that the great work of God asks us to "believe in the one sent by God." That is, to believe in Jesus!
- John 6: 30-33: "What sign will you yourself do, the sign which will make us believe in you?" People had asked: What should we do to carry out the work of God? Jesus responds: "The work of God is to believe in the one who has sent," that is to believe in Jesus. Therefore people formulate the new question: "Which sign do you do so that we can see and can believe? Which work do you do?" This means that they did not understand the multiplication of the loaves as a sign from God to legitimize Jesus before the people, as the one sent by God! They continue to argue: In the past, our fathers ate the manna which Moses gave them! They called it "bread from Heaven" (Wisdom 16: 20), that is, "bread of God," Moses continues to be the great leader to believe in. If Jesus wants the people to believe in him, he should work a greater sign than Moses. "What work do you do?"

Jesus responds that the bread given by Moses was not the true bread from heaven. Coming from on high, yes, but it was not the bread of God, because it did not guarantee life to anyone. All of them died in the desert (Jn 6: 49). The true bread of heaven, the bread of God, is the one which conquers death and gives life! It is the one which descends from Heaven and gives life to the world. It is Jesus himself! Jesus tries to help the people to liberate themselves from the way of thinking of the past. For him, fidelity to the past does not mean to close oneself in the ancient things and not accept renewal. Fidelity to the past means to accept the novelty which comes as the fruit of the seed which was planted in the past.

- John 6: 34-35: "Lord, gives us always of that bread!" Jesus answers clearly: "I am the bread of life!" To eat the bread of heaven is the same as to believe in Jesus and accept to follow the road that he teaches us. That is: "My food is to do the will of the one who has sent me and to complete his work!" (Jn 4: 34). This is the true food which nourishes the person, which transforms life and gives new life.

## Prayer of Psalm 111

Alleluia! I give thanks to Yahweh with all my heart,  
in the meeting-place of honest people, in the assembly. Great are the deeds of Yahweh,  
to be pondered by all who delight in them. Full of splendor and majesty his work, his

saving justice stands firm forever.

He gives us a memorial of his great deeds; Yahweh is mercy and tenderness.

He gives food to those who fear him, he keeps his covenant ever in mind.

His works show his people his power

in giving them the birthright of the nations. The works of his hands are fidelity and justice, all his precepts are trustworthy,

established for ever and ever, accomplished in fidelity and honesty. Deliverance he sends to his people, his covenant he imposes forever, holy and awesome his name.

The root of wisdom is fear of Yahweh; those who attain it are wise.

His praise will continue forever.

## 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.*

# 01 AUG 2021

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## In it to win it?

*Quid pro quo* sounds like a pretty good deal. "This for that": the time-honored barter in which we swap resources or labor for room and board, if not a bit more. Consumer culture initiates all of us into the pursuit of the best trade. No surprise that early followers of Jesus imagined they were swapping their attention to his teaching for free food and even better opportunities down the road. Jesus seeks friends who share his vision, not churchgoers hoping for a celestial deal. When it comes to the religion quest, what's in it for you?

**Today's readings:**

Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15; Ephesians 4:17, 20-24; John 6:24-35 ([113](#)).

*"You are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled."*

# 02 AUG 2021

MEMORIAL OF PETER JULIAN EYMARD, PRIEST

## The communion of saints awaits you

Saint Peter Julian Eymard was a 19th-century French priest with a devotion to the Eucharist. He founded two religious institutes with a focus on Eucharistic Adoration: the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament for men and the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament for women. The former prepared children for their First Communion and reached out to lapsed Catholics to bring them back to receiving Communion. He famously said, "You take Communion to become holy, not because you already are." Perhaps you spent some time away from the Eucharist because of the pandemic. No matter how long you are apart, Christ eagerly awaits your return.

**Today's readings:**

Numbers 11:4b-15; Matthew 14:13-21 ([407](#)).

*"He said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples."*

# 03 AUG 2021

## We're in the same boat

The "Barque (boat) of Saint Peter" is one of the oldest symbols of the Catholic Church. Early church fathers, like Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, compared the church to a sailing vessel. Saint Boniface wrote: "The church is like a great ship being pounded by the waves of life's different stresses. Our duty is not to abandon ship, but to keep her on her course." As Peter learned, the trick is to place our trust in Jesus. Pray for Pope Francis—successor to Peter—that he can guide the church through today's troubled waters.

**Today's readings:**

Numbers 12:1-13; Matthew 14:22-36 or Matthew 15:1-2, 10-14 ([408](#)).

*"Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus."*

# 04 AUG 2021

MEMORIAL OF JOHN VIANNEY, PRIEST

## Ministry for the ministers

The unique lives of Catholic priests and religious sometimes give rise to stressful times and difficult transitions that need the help of a healing hand. The Saint John Vianney Center in Downingtown, Pennsylvania serves Catholic clergy and religious struggling with behavioral and emotional issues, addictive and compulsive disorders, weight management, and other challenging issues that arise during their vocational journeys. The JVC employs modern therapeutic support along with traditional prayer, spiritual practices, and the intercession of

today's saint to restore these dedicated men and women to active and fruitful ministry. Pray for your religious sisters and brothers, priests, deacons, and bishops. They need your love.

**Today's readings:**

Numbers 13:1-2, 25—14:1, 26-29a, 34-35; Matthew 15:21-28 ([409](#)).

*“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.”*

**05**AUG<sub>2021</sub>

MEMORIAL OF THE DEDICATION OF THE BASILICA OF MARY MAJOR

## Legend-worthy Madonna

Legend has it that a freak snowstorm in August was a sign that urged a Christian couple to build an enormous Roman church dedicated to the Virgin: the Basilica of Mary Major, founded in the 400s. Yet this story is like many others that church historians call “legends.” Our legends are not to be disdained; they usually uphold truths as interesting as the facts. In this case, the larger truth is that Mary is a key member of the communion of saints who helps us on our path to God. During this month when Mary is particularly venerated, ask for her intercession.

**Today's readings:**

Numbers 20:1-13; Matthew 16:13-23 ([410](#)).

*“Then, raising his hand, Moses struck the rock twice with his staff, and water gushed out in abundance for the people and their livestock to drink.”*

**06**AUG<sub>2021</sub>

FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD

## Shhh . . .

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply,” says leadership guru Stephen Covey. When we fail to listen, we miss the messages necessary for growth in ourselves and others. Listening builds a well of wisdom that helps the listener and the speaker get to know themselves better. “Listening is a form of spiritual hospitality,” says Henri Nouwen, and Pope Francis calls listening a form of “self-sacrifice” as we put another person above ourselves and “share questions and doubts.” God commanded Jesus’ disciples to listen to him. We are called to do the same.

**Today's readings:**

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

*“This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.”*

**07**AUG<sub>2021</sub>

MEMORIAL OF SIXTUS II, POPE, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

## The courage to teach

Today's teachers have a tough job (which the pandemic only made more difficult). But imagine risking your life to teach about your faith. That's how it was "back in the day." In the year 258, Roman soldiers burst into the room where Sixtus was teaching, dragged him from the chair, and beheaded him in the street. Six deacons joined him in martyrdom that day. Many bishops, priests, and deacons were murdered during that persecution by the Roman Emperor Valerian. Next time you're in the pew, find Sixtus in Eucharistic Prayer I, the first one printed in your missalette. He's in the list that includes “Linus, Cletus, Clement,” and other notables of the early church. When you get to the name Sixtus II, pause and remember his courageous sacrifice to pass on the faith.

**Today's readings:**

Deuteronomy 6:4-13; Matthew 17:14-20 ([412](#)).

*“[I]f you have faith the size of a mustard seed . . . Nothing will be impossible for you.”*