

# 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 10, 2021

*28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time*

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send Your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures as 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 silence in us 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 on the way to 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 the Father to us and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.

## Gospel Reading: Mark 10: 17-30

### **A Key to the Reading:**

The Gospel of the 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time tells the story of a young man who asks Jesus for the way to eternal life. Jesus gives him an answer, but the young man cannot accept it because he is very rich. Wealth gives a kind of security to people, and they have difficulty in giving up such security. Because such people are attached to the advantages that their possessions bring, they worry about defending their interests. The poor person does not have such worries and thus is freer. But there are poor people with a rich mentality. They are poor, but not "poor in spirit" (Mt 5: 3). Not just wealth, but also the desire for wealth, can change people and make them slaves to the goods of this world. Such people would find it difficult to accept Jesus' invitation: "Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow Me" (Mk 10: 21). Such people will not take the step suggested by Jesus. Am I able to leave everything for the Kingdom?

In our text, several people seek Jesus to ask Him for advice: the rich young man, the disciples, and Peter. In our reading, let us look at the preoccupations of each of these persons and at Jesus' reply to them.

### **A Division of the Text to Help with the Reading:**

- Mark 10: 17: The request of the one who wishes to follow Jesus
- Mark 10: 18-19: Jesus' surprising and demanding reply
- Mark 10: 20-21: The conversation between Jesus and the young man
- Mark 10: 22: The young man is alarmed and will not follow Jesus
- Mark 10: 23-27: The conversation between Jesus and His disciples concerning the rich entering the Kingdom
- Mark 10: 28: Peter's question
- Mark 10: 29-30: Jesus' reply

### **Text:**

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother." He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to

enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God." Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come."

## 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.*

- What touched you most in this text? Why?
- What worried the young man and what deceived him?
- What does the following mean for us today: "Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor"? Can we take this literally? What do you "own"? With so many poor in society today, how do you decide who to give to?
- How do we understand the comparison between the needle and the camel?
- How do we understand the hundredfold in this life, but with persecutions?
- How do we understand and practice today Jesus' suggestions to the rich young man?
- Jesus tells His disciples on His mission to go without gold or silver or much of anything. What of those who claim to be missionaries of Jesus, while enjoying their large estates, fancy cars, and the fame from their positions?

## For Those Who Wish to Go Deeper Into the Theme

### **The Context of Yesterday and of Today.**

- This Sunday's Gospel describes the on-going conversion that, according to Jesus' invitation, must take place in our relationship with material goods. To understand fully the importance of Jesus' instructions, it is good to remember the wider context in which Mark places these texts. Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem, where He will be crucified (cf. Mk 8: 27; 9: 30, 33; 10: 1, 17, 32). He is about to give His life. He knows that He soon will be killed but does not recoil. He says, 'The Son of Man Himself came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many!' (Mk 10: 45) This attitude of fidelity and dedication to the mission received from the Father makes it possible for Jesus to see what really matters in life.
- Jesus' suggestions are valid for all times, both for Jesus' times and Mark's times as well as for today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They are like mirrors that mirror back what is

important in life, yesterday and today: to start again, from the beginning, the building of the Kingdom, renewing human relationships on all levels, among ourselves and with God, as well as with material goods.

### **A Commentary on the Text:**

- Mark 10: 17-19: The Commandments and Eternal Life

Someone comes and asks, "Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Matthew's Gospel says that it was a young man (Mt 19: 20, 22). Jesus replies rather harshly, "Why do you call Me good. No one is good but God alone!" Jesus deflects attention from Himself to God, since He wishes to do the Father's will, to reveal the Father's plan. Then Jesus says, "You know the commandments: you shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false witness, honor your father and mother." The young man had asked what he must do to inherit eternal life. He wanted to live close to God! But Jesus only reminds him of the commandments that concern life close to the neighbor! He does not mention the first three commandments that talk of the relationship with God! For Jesus, we can only be in goodstead with God if we are in good stead with the neighbor. We must not deceive ourselves. The gate that leads to God is our neighbor. There is no other!

- Mark 10: 20: What is the Use of Keeping the Commandments?

The young man answers that he already had long observed the commandments. What follows is strange. The young man wanted to know the way to eternal life. Now, the way to eternal life was and still is to do God's will as expressed in the commandments. This means that the young man observed the commandments without knowing why! He did not know that his practice of observing the commandments since his youth was the way to God, to eternal life. Many Catholics today do not know why they are Catholic. "I was born in Italy, I was born in Ireland, so I am Catholic!" Just a habit!"

- Mark 10: 21-22: Sharing Goods with the Poor

Jesus looked steadily at him and He was filled with love for him and He said, "You need to do one thing more. Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow Me!" Jesus does not judge the young man, does not criticize him, but seeks to help him take one more step in life. The conversion that Jesus asks for is an on-going one. The observance of the commandments is but the first step on a ladder that goes further and higher. Jesus asks for more! The observance of the commandments prepares us to be able to give ourselves completely to our neighbor. The Ten Commandments are the way to the perfect practice of the two commandments of love of God and of neighbor (Mk 12: 29-31; Mt 7: 12). Jesus asks a lot, but He asks it with much love. The young man does not accept Jesus' invitation and goes away because "he was a man of great wealth".

- Mark 10: 23-27: The Camel and the Eye of a Needle

When the young man goes away, Jesus comments on his decision: How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! The disciples are astonished. Jesus repeats what He said and adds a proverb that was used then to say that something was humanly impossible. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God! Each nation has its expressions and proverbs that cannot be taken literally. For instance, in Brazil, to say that someone must not bother other people they say: "Go and take a bath!" If one takes this expression literally then one is deceived and is not aware of the message!

The same may be said about the camel that has to go through the eye of a needle. Impossible!

The disciples are astonished by what Jesus says! This means that they had not understood Jesus' answer to the rich young man: "Go and sell all you own, give the money to the poor, and come, follow Me!" The young man had observed the commandments without understanding why. Something similar was happening to the disciples. To follow Jesus, they had left everything (Mk 1: 18, 20), without understanding why they had left everything! If they had understood the why, they would not have been so astonished by Jesus' demands. When wealth or the desire for wealth takes over the human heart and vision, then it becomes difficult to understand the meaning of life and of the Gospel. Only God can help such a person! "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God, because for God everything is possible."

When Jesus says that it is almost impossible for "a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," He is not referring in the first instance to entering heaven after death, but to entering the community around him. To this day, it is very difficult for a rich person to leave everything and enter into a small basic ecclesial community side by side with the poor, together with them, and so to follow Jesus.

- Mark 10: 28-30: The Conversation between Jesus and Peter

Peter had understood that "to enter the kingdom of God" was the same thing as following Jesus in poverty. So he asks, "We have left everything and followed You. What then shall we get in return?" Despite leaving everything, Peter still had the old mentality. He had not yet understood the meaning of service and gratuity. He and his companions left everything to have something in return: "What then shall we get in return?" Jesus' reply is symbolic. He hints that they must not expect any return, any security, any promotion. They will receive a hundredfold, yes! But not without persecutions in this life! In the world to come they will have the eternal life of which the young man spoke. "In truth I tell you, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, or land for My sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times as much, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and land – and persecutions, too – now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life

## Further information:

### **Jesus and the Option for the Poor**

A double slavery marked the state of people in Galilee at the time of Jesus: (i) The political slavery of Herod, supported by the Roman Empire, that imposed a general organized system of exploitation and repression; (ii) The slavery of the official religion, upheld by the religious authorities of the time. Because of this, the family, the community, the clan were disintegrating, and most people lived excluded, marginalized, with no fixed place, without a religion and without a society. To fight this disintegration of the community and the family, there were several movements, which, like Jesus, tried a new way of life and of living together in community. Such were the Essenes, the Pharisees and, later, the Zealots, all of whom lived in community. In Jesus' community, however, there was something new and different from the other two groups. This was the attitude towards the poor and the excluded.

The community of Pharisees lived *apart*. The word "Pharisee" means "separate". They lived apart from the *impure* people. Many Pharisees looked upon the people as ignorant and cursed (Jn 7: 49), full of sin (Jn 9: 34). They learned nothing from the people (Jn 9:

34). On the other hand, Jesus and His community lived among the excluded, who were considered impure: publicans, sinners, prostitutes, and lepers (Mk 2: 16; 1: 41; Lk 7: 37). Jesus sees the richness and value they possess (Mt 11: 25-26; Lk 21: 1-4). He proclaimed the poor happy because the Kingdom belongs to them (Lk 6: 20; Mt 5: 3). He defines His own mission as "proclaiming the Good News to the poor" (Lk 4: 18). He lives like the poor. He owns nothing, not even a stone to lay His head upon (Lk 9: 58). To those who wished to follow him he offered a choice: God or mammon! (Mt 6: 24). He tells them to make choices in favor of the poor! (Mk 10: 21) The poverty that characterizes Jesus' life and that of His disciples, also characterized His mission. Contrary to other missionaries (Mt 23: 15), Jesus' disciples could not carry anything with them, no gold, no silver, no two tunics, no purse and no sandals (Mt 10: 9-10). They had to trust in the hospitality of others (Lk 9: 4; 10: 5-6). And if they were made welcome by the people, they had to work like everyone else and live on what they earned (Lk 10: 7-8). They had to look after the sick and needy (Lk 10: 9; Mt 10: 8). Then they could say to people, "The Kingdom of God is very near to you" (Lk 10: 9).

On the other hand, when it is a matter of administering goods, what strikes us in Jesus' parables is the seriousness that He demands in the use of these goods (Mt 25: 21, 26; Lk 19: 22-23). Jesus wants money to be at the service of life (Lk 16: 9-13). For Jesus, poverty was not synonymous with laziness and negligence. This different witness in favor of the poor was what was missing in the popular movements of the times of the Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots. In the Bible, every time a movement arises to renew the Covenant, it begins by establishing once again the rights of the poor and excluded. Without this, the Covenant is impossible. Thus did the prophets and thus does Jesus. He denounces the old system that, in the name of God, excluded the poor. Jesus proclaims a new beginning that, in the name of God, gathers the excluded. This is the meaning and reason for the insertion of the mission of the Jesus' community amid the poor. He dips into the roots and inaugurates the New Covenant.

## Praying with Psalm 15 (14)

### God's Guest!

Yahweh, who can find a home in Your tent, who can dwell on Your holy mountain?

Whoever lives blamelessly, who acts uprightly, who speaks the truth from the heart, who keeps the tongue under control, who does not wrong a comrade, who casts no discredit on a neighbor, who looks with scorn on the vile, but honors those who fear Yahweh, who stands by an oath at any cost, who asks no interest on loans, who takes no bribe to harm the innocent. No one who so acts can ever be shaken.

## Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank You 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 what 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.*

**10OCT**2021 - TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

More than three-quarters of those suffering from mental illness worldwide have no access to the care that could restore them to healthy relationships and productive lives. The World Federation for Mental Health therefore dedicates this Mental Health Day to the theme "Mental Health in an Unequal World." Factors like race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and economic status complicate the path to adequate support. Pray the Rosary's Mysteries of Light today that clarity be given to those who struggle with mental health issues, and the societies that devalue them.

### Today's readings:

Wisdom 7:7-11; Hebrews 4:12-13; Mark 10:17-30 (143).

*"I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me."*

**11OCT**2021 - MEMORIAL OF JOHN XXIII, POPE

## He saw thee more clearly

The humble Pope John XXIII disliked the pomp and attention that came with his role, and he insisted on being called simply "the pope." Nearly 60 years since his pontificate, he is remembered in Italy as *il papa buono*, "the good pope." In the short time he was pope—less than five years before he died of cancer in 1963—he changed the Catholic Church like few others by convening the Second Vatican Council. On his deathbed, he said: "It is not that the gospel has changed; it is that we have begun to understand it better." We can always use the intercession of "the good pope" as we keep seeking to understand better what the gospel means in our changing times.

### Today's readings:

Romans 1:1-7; Luke 11:29-32 (467).

*"Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation."*

**12OCT**2021

## Our pillar of strength

Today is the feast day of Virgin Maria del Pilar, a Spanish devotion commemorating the first official Marian apparition of the Catholic Church. According to tradition, Mary first appeared—while still alive—to the apostle James in the year 40, as he preached the gospel to the people of Spain. Saint James, despondent over his progress, prayed for reassurance, and Our Lady appeared to him in a supernatural manner, standing upon a pillar held aloft by angels. Because October is the month of the Rosary, honor Maria with the beautiful [Hail Holy Queen](#) prayer that's part of that devotion.

### Today's readings:

Romans 1:16-25; Luke 11:37-41 (468).

*"I am not ashamed of the Gospel."*

**13OCT**2021

## God to humanity: Can't buy my love

From at least the time of the Pharisees, important people in the eyes of the world often assumed they had the inside track on a pleasant afterlife. Pope Francis begged to differ in an Advent season homily several years back. At the Last Judgment, Francis said, Jesus will not say, "'You, come with me because you have given so much money to the church. You are a benefactor of the church. Come, come to Heaven.' No. You can't buy your way into Heaven. And He won't say: 'You are very important, you have studied so much and earned so many honors, come into



Heaven.' No. Awards do not open the gate of Heaven," Francis said. "What will Jesus tell us to open up the gates of Heaven? 'I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat. I was homeless, and you gave Me shelter. I was sick, and you came to see Me. I was in prison, and you came to visit Me.' Jesus is humility," Francis said. Close your purse or wallet, and open your heart!

**Today's readings:**

Romans 2:1-11; Luke 11:42-46 (469).

*"You pay tithes of mint and of rue and of every garden herb, but you pay no attention to judgment and to love for God."*

**14OCT** 2021 - MEMORIAL OF CALLISTUS I, POPE, MARTYR

## Patron saint of second (or more) chances

Saint Callistus I is inspiration to anyone who has made major errors in life. Callistus seriously messed up, not once but twice. Born into slavery, his master put him in charge of a bank that Callistus criminally mismanaged. After a while in prison, he was freed to earn back the money he owed. Instead, he was arrested for brawling in a synagogue. Strike two. Nonetheless, Callistus reformed himself, served the early church as a cemetery manager, and was eventually elected pope! Consider saying a prayer of thanks for a church that offers redemption (even the papacy) to people who have fallen hard.

**Today's readings:**

Romans 3:21-30; Luke 11:47-54 (470).

*"Woe to you, scholars of the law! You have taken away the key of knowledge."*

**15OCT** 2021 - MEMORIAL OF TERESA OF JESUS, VIRGIN, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

## Don't be afraid of the dark

The dark night of the soul, a term coined by Spanish mystic Saint John of the Cross, describes a period on the spiritual journey when one feels distant from God and suffers physical and emotional pain. Saint Teresa of Ávila, a close friend of John's, actually felt like she was going mad as she pursued the contemplative life. But then, in 1567, while gazing at a statue of Jesus, she felt an ecstasy beyond description as she reached "union with God." Teresa wrote much about her interior life, and she encouraged others to experience the "great gifts that come through abandoning everything to God and dying to oneself." Pray for the patience and humility to stay the spiritual course.

**Today's readings:**

Romans 4:1-8; Luke 12:1-7 (471).

*"Therefore, whatever you have said in the darkness will be heard in the light."*

**16OCT** 2021

## I was hungry

World Food Day was established in 1979 by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and is celebrated annually on this date in 150 countries. The theme for this year's celebration is, "Safe food now for a healthy tomorrow." The World Food Program (WFP) is the food-assistance branch of the organization. As of 2019, the WFP has served 97 million people in 88 countries, and it was awarded the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts to combat hunger and contribute to peace in conflict areas. Take a moment today to thank God for the food you eat and the people who produce it, and to support your local World Food Day celebration.

**Today's readings:**

Romans 4:13, 16-18; Luke 12:8-12 (472).

*"I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God."*