

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.

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30th Sunday of Ordinary Time

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 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 to us the Father and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.

Reading

A Key to the Reading:

This Sunday's Gospel tells the story of the healing of Bartimaeus, the blind man from Jericho (Mk 10: 46-52). This story includes a long instruction from Jesus to His disciples (Mk 8: 22 to 10: 52). Mark places the healing of the anonymous blind man at the beginning of this instruction (Mk 8: 22-26). Then, at the end, he tells us of the healing of the blind man from Jericho. As we shall see, the two healings are symbols of what went on between Jesus and His disciples. They point to the process and purpose of the slow learning by the disciples. They describe a starting point (the anonymous blind man) and an end point (Bartimaeus) of Jesus' instruction to His disciples and to all of us.

As we read, we shall try to look at the attitudes of Jesus, the blind Bartimaeus and the people of Jericho, and at all that each of them says and does. As you read and meditate on the text, think that you are looking into a mirror. Which image of you is it reflecting: that of Jesus, of the blind Bartimaeus, or of the people?

A Division of the Text as a Help to the Reading:

- Mark 10:46: The description of the context of the episode
- Mark 10:47: The cry of the poor
- Mark 10:48: The reaction of the people to the cry of the poor
- Mark 10:49-50: Jesus' reaction to the cry of the poor
- Mark 10: 51-52: The conversation between Jesus and the blind man and his healing

Text:

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of

David, have pity on me." Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you." He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see." Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

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 did you like best in this text? Why?
- What is Jesus' attitude: what does He say and do?
- What is the attitude of the people of Jericho: what do they say and do?
- What is Bartimaeus' attitude: what does he say and do?
- What lesson can we learn from the healing of the blind Bartimaeus?

For Those Who Wish to Go Deeper Into the Theme

The Context of Jesus' Long Instruction to His Disciples:

The healing of the anonymous blind man at the beginning of the instruction, takes place in two phases (Mk 8: 22-26). In the first phase the blind man begins to perceive things, but barely. He sees people as if they were trees (Mk 8: 24). In the second phase, after the second trial, he begins to understand better. The disciples were like the anonymous blind man: they accepted Jesus as Messiah, but they could not accept the cross (Mk 8: 31-33). They were people who saw people as trees. Their faith in Jesus was not strong. They continued to be blind! When Jesus insisted on service and the giving of one's life (Mk 8: 31, 34; 9: 31; 10: 33-34), among themselves they insisted on knowing who was the most important (Mk 9: 34), and they continued to ask for the first places in the Kingdom, one on the right and the other on the left of the throne (Mk 10: 35-37). This shows that the dominant ideology of the time had taken deep root in their mentality. After living with Jesus for a number of years, they had not yet been renewed enough to see things and people. They looked at Jesus with the eyes of the past. They wanted Him to be what they imagined He should be: a glorious Messiah (Mk 8: 32). But the aim of Jesus' instruction was that His disciples might be like the blind Bartimaeus who accepted Jesus as He was, a faith that Peter did not have as yet. Thus Bartimaeus is a model for the disciples of Jesus' time and for the community of Mark's time as well as for all of us.

A Commentary on the Text:

- Mark 10: 46-47: The description of the context of the episode: The cry of the poor
At last, after a long walk, Jesus and His disciples come to Jericho, the last stop before going up to Jerusalem. The blind Bartimaeus is sitting by the side of the road. He

cannot take part in the procession that accompanies Jesus. He is blind. He can see nothing. But he shouts, calling for the Lord's help: "Son of David! Have pity on me!" The expression "Son of David" was the most common title that people ascribed to the Messiah (Mt 21: 9; Mk 11: 10). But Jesus did not like this title. He criticized and questioned the attitude of the doctors of the law who taught the people that the Messiah would be the Son of David (Mk 12: 35-37).

- Mark 10: 48: The reaction of the people to the cry of the poor

The cry of the poor feels uncomfortable, unpleasant. Those who were following the procession with Jesus try to keep Bartimaeus quiet. But "he shouted all the louder!" Today too the cry of the poor feels uncomfortable. Today there are millions who shout: migrants, prisoners, hungry people, sick people, those marginalized and oppressed, the unemployed, without wages, without a home, without a roof, without land, who never feel loved! Their shouts are silenced, in our homes, in the churches, in world organizations. Only those who open their eyes to what is happening in the world will listen to them. But many are those who have stopped listening. They've gotten used to the situation. Others try to silence the cries, as they tried with the blind man from Jericho. But they cannot silence the cry of the poor. God listens to them (Ex 2: 23-24; 3: 7). God says: "You will not ill-treat widows or orphans; if you ill-treat them in any way and they make an appeal to Me for help, I shall certainly hear their appeal!" (Ex 22: 21).

- Mark 10:49-50: Jesus' reaction to the cry of the poor

What does Jesus do? How does God hear this cry? Jesus stops and orders the blind man to be brought to Him. Those who wanted to silence him, to silence the uncomfortable cry of the poor, now, at Jesus' request, see themselves bound to act in such a way as to bring the poor to Jesus. Bartimaeus leaves everything and goes to Jesus. Not that he possessed much, just a cloak. It is all he has to cover his body (cf. Ex 22: 25-26). It is his security, his solid land!

- Mark 10: 51-52: *The conversation between Jesus and the blind man and his healing*

Jesus asks: "What do you want Me to do for you?" It is not enough to shout. One must know what one is shouting for! The blind man answers: "My teacher! Let me see again!" Bartimaeus addressed Jesus in a manner not at all common, even as we have seen, with the title "Son of David" that Jesus did not like (Mk 12: 35-37). But Bartimaeus has more faith in Jesus than in the ideas and titles concerning Jesus. Not so the others present. They do not see what is necessary, like Peter (Mk 8: 32). Bartimaeus knows how to give his life by accepting Jesus without any conditions. Jesus says to him: "Go! Your faith has saved you!" At once his sight was restored. He leaves everything and follows Jesus (Mk 10: 52). His healing is the result of his faith in Jesus (Mk 10: 46-52). Now healed, Bartimaeus follows Jesus and goes with him up to Jerusalem and to Calvary! He becomes a model disciple for Peter and for all of us: to put our faith more in Jesus than in our ideas about Jesus!

Further Information:

The Context of the Journey to Jerusalem

Jesus and His disciples are on the way to Jerusalem (Mk 10: 32). Jesus goes before them. He is in a hurry. He knows that they will kill Him. The prophet Isaiah had foretold this (Is 50: 4-6; 53: 1-10). His death is not something that will come about through blind destiny or an established plan, but as a consequence of an assumed duty, of a mission received from the Father together with those excluded of His time. Jesus warns the disciples

three times concerning the torture and death that await Him in Jerusalem (Mk 8: 31; 9: 31; 10: 33). The disciple must follow His master, even to suffering with Him (Mk 8: 34-35). The disciples are taken aback and go with Him full of fear (Mk 9: 32).

They do not understand what is happening. Suffering was not part of the idea they had of the Messiah (Mk 8: 32-33; Mt 16: 22). Not only did some of them not understand, but they kept on cherishing personal ambitions. James and John ask for a place in the glory of His Kingdom, one on the right hand and one on the left of Jesus (Mk 10: 35-37). They want to go beyond Peter! They do not understand Jesus' plan. They are only concerned with their own interests. This reflects the fights and tensions that existed in the communities of Mark's time and that exist even now in our communities. Jesus reacts decisively: "You do not know what you are asking!" (Mk 10: 38) He asks them if they are capable of drinking the cup that He will drink and receive the baptism that He will receive. The cup is the cup of suffering, and the baptism is the baptism of blood. Jesus wants to know whether rather than taking a place of honor they will be willing to give their lives even to death. They answer, "We can" (Mk 8: 39).

This seems to be an answer that comes from their lips because a few days later they abandon Jesus and leave Him alone at the hour of suffering (Mk 14: 50). They have but a little critical conscience; they do not see His personal reality. In His instruction to the disciples, Jesus stresses the exercise of authority (cf. Mk 9: 33-35). In those days, those who held power paid no attention to the people. They acted according to their ideas (cf. Mk 6: 17-29). The Roman Empire controlled the world and kept it submissive by force and thus, by means of tributes, taxes and customs, was able to concentrate the wealth of the people in the hands of a few in Rome. Society was characterized by the exercise of repression and the abuse of power. Jesus thinks otherwise. He says: "Among you this is not to happen. No, anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant!" (Mk 10: 43). He tells them to avoid privileges and rivalry. He turns the system upside-down and stresses service as a means of overcoming personal ambition. Finally, He gives His own life in witness of what He said: "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).

Faith is a Force that Transforms People

The Good News of the Kingdom says that Jesus is like a fertilizer. He makes the seed of life grow in people, a seed hidden like fire under the embers of observance, lifeless. Jesus blows on the embers and the fire glows, the Kingdom is revealed and people rejoice. The condition is always the same: faith in Jesus.

When fear takes hold of a person, faith disappears and hope is extinguished. During His moment of torment, Jesus scolds His disciples for their lack of faith (Mk 4: 40). They do not believe, because they are afraid (Mk 4: 41). Jesus could not work miracles in Nazareth because people there did not believe (Mk 6: 6). They did not believe because Jesus did not measure up to their ideas of how He should be (Mk 6: 2-3). It is precisely lack of faith that prevents the disciples from driving out the "dumb spirit" who ill-treats a sick child (Mk 9: 17). Jesus criticizes them: "Faithless generation!" (Mk 9: 19). Then He tells them how to re-kindle faith: "This is the kind that can only be driven out by prayer" (Mk 9: 29).

Jesus urged people to have faith in Him and consequently created trust in others (Mk 5: 34, 36; 7: 25-29; 9: 23-29; 10: 52; 12: 34, 41-44). Throughout Mark's Gospel, faith in Jesus and in His word is like a force that transforms people. It enables people to have their sins forgiven (Mk 2: 5), to overcome suffering (Mk 4: 40), to have the power to heal and purify themselves (Mk 5: 34). Faith obtains the victory over death, as when the twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus enkindles in her father faith in Jesus and His words (Mk 5: 36). Faith makes Bartimaeus jump for joy: "Your faith has saved you!" (Mk 10: 52) If you

say to the mountain, "Be pulled up and thrown into the sea," the mountain will fall into the sea, but one must not doubt in one's heart (Mk 11: 23-24). "Because all things are possible for those who believe!" (Mk 9: 23) "Have faith in God!" (Mk 11: 22). Thanks to His words and actions, Jesus arouses in people a dormant force that people are not aware of possessing. This is what happens to Jairus (Mk 5: 36), to the woman with the hemorrhage (Mk 5: 34), to the father with an epileptic son (Mk 9: 23-24), to the blind Bartimaeus (Mk 10: 52), and to many other people. Because of their faith in Jesus they enabled a new life to grow in them and in others.

The healing of Bartimaeus (Mk 10: 46-52) clarifies a very important aspect of Jesus' long instruction to His disciples. Bartimaeus had called Jesus by His messianic title of "Son of David!" (Mk 10: 47). Jesus did not like this title (Mk 12: 35-37). But even though he called Jesus by a title that was not quite correct, Bartimaeus had faith and was healed! Not so Peter who no longer believed in the ideas of Jesus. Bartimaeus changed his mind, was converted, left everything behind and followed Jesus on His journey to Calvary! (Mk 10: 52).

A full understanding of the following of Jesus is not obtained through theoretical instruction, but through a practical commitment, journeying with Him along the way of service from Galilee to Jerusalem. Anyone who tries to hang on to Peter's idea, that is, that of the glorious Messiah without the cross, will not understand Jesus and will never be truly a disciple. Anyone who wants to believe in Jesus and is willing "to give his/her life" (Mk 8: 35), accept "to be last" (Mk 9: 35), "drink the cup and carry the cross" (Mk 10: 38), like Bartimaeus, even with ideas that are not entirely correct, will have the power "to follow Jesus along the way" (Mk 10: 52). It is in the certainty of being able to walk with Jesus that we find the source of courage and the seed of the victory of the cross.

Praying with Psalm 31 (30)

In You, Yahweh, I Have Taken Refuge!

In You, Yahweh, I have taken refuge, let me never be put to shame,
in Your saving justice deliver me, rescue me, turn Your ear to me, make haste.
Be for me a rock-fastness, a fortified citadel to save me.
You are my rock, my rampart;
true to Your name, lead me and guide me! Draw me out of the net they have spread
for me, for You are my refuge;
into Your hands I commit my spirit,
by You have I been redeemed. God of truth, You hate those who serve useless idols;
but my trust is in Yahweh:
I will delight and rejoice in Your faithful love! You, who have seen my misery,
and witnessed the miseries of my soul, have not handed me over to the enemy,
but have given me freedom to roam at large.

Take pity on me, Yahweh, for I am in trouble. Vexation is gnawing away my eyes,
my soul deep within me.

For my life is worn out with sorrow, and my years with sighs.
My strength gives way under my misery, and my bones are all wasted away.

The sheer number of my enemies makes me contemptible, loathsome to my neighbors,
and my friends shrink from me in horror.
When people see me in the street they take to their heels. I have no more place in their hearts than a corpse,
or something lost.
All I hear is slander -- terror wherever I turn -- as they plot together against me, scheming to take my life.

But my trust is in You, Yahweh; I say, 'You are my God,'
every moment of my life is in Your hands,
rescue me from the clutches of my foes who pursue me; let Your face shine on Your servant,
save me in Your faithful love.

I call on You, Yahweh,
so let disgrace fall not on me, but on the wicked.
Let them go down to Sheol in silence, muzzles on their lying mouths,
which speak arrogantly against the upright in pride and contempt.

Yahweh, what quantities of good things You have in store for those who fear You,
and bestow on those who make You their refuge, for all humanity to see.
Safe in Your presence You hide them,
far from human plotting, shielding them in Your tent, far from contentious tongues.

Blessed be Yahweh
who works for me miracles of His faithful love (in a fortified city)! In a state of terror I cried,
"I have been cut off from Your sight!"
Yet You heard my plea for help when I cried out to You.

Love Yahweh, all His faithful:
Yahweh protects His loyal servants,
but He repays the arrogant with interest. Be brave, take heart,
all who put your hope in Yahweh.

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.

24OCT 2021 - THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Adopt an attitude of gratitude

Here's an intriguing take on a familiar commission: Thankful people become missionaries. "To be 'in a state of mission' is a reflection of gratitude," Pope Francis declares on this World Mission Sunday. Yet this "state of mission" belongs to the whole church, not just to those brave souls who pack up and go off to foreign lands. Jesus commissions his friends to take the Good News wherever we go. Grateful folks do this cheerfully. How can we keep from singing, when a song's been placed in our hearts? Pray the Rosary's Glorious Mysteries and live the mission of gratitude.

Today's readings:

Jeremiah 31:7-9; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52 (149).

"Immediately [the blind man] received his sight, and followed Jesus on the way."

25OCT 2021

Good for what ails you

Research suggests that regular meditation may help reduce blood pressure, digestive problems, anxiety and depression, and insomnia, among other ailments. Prayerful meditation also heals your soul. Catholics have a lot of help at their disposal here—from the Rosary to *Lectio Divina*. "There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters. Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly," says the catechism. "But a method is only a guide; the important thing is to advance, with the Holy Spirit, along the one way of prayer: Christ Jesus." Take the best medicine of all!

Today's readings:

Romans 8:12-17; Luke 13:10-17 (479).

"Woman, you are set free of your infirmity."

26OCT 2021

Care for the caregivers, too

In November 2017 European members of the World Medical Association convened at the Vatican for a conversation on ethical issues surrounding palliative care. Nearby, the International Confederation of Catholic Health Care Institutions was meeting to discuss inequalities in health care. Pope Francis addressed them all: "The categorical imperative is to never abandon the sick." No matter the graveness of the medical condition, "we are called to show love and closeness." Recognizing that "visit the sick" is one of the seven corporal works of mercy, how can you show or send care today—perhaps by supporting Catholic chaplains during this Pastoral Care Week?

Today's readings:

Romans 8:18-25; Luke 13:18-21 (480).

"Sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us."

27OCT 2021

Gentle reminder: Pray today

Benedictine monk Father Godfrey Diekmann, O.S.B., a pillar of the liturgical movement of the last century, tells the story of picking watercress one day on his monastery's grounds and landing in a swamp. Try as he might he couldn't extricate himself. He was eventually rescued by his fellow monks. He wrote of the incident: "What now bothers me is that during the entire ordeal of about 25 minutes I didn't have a single pious thought! What does that say of my more than 50 years of monastic life? Do I have to start all over again?" Forgetting to pray happens to the

best of us. But it is never too late to start. A simple prayer of blessing, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, or praise will suffice. Better yet, start with *Veni, Sancte Spiritus!*, “Come, Holy Spirit!”

Today's readings:

Romans 8:26-30; Luke 13:22-30 (481).

“The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought.”

28OCT 2021 - FEAST OF SIMON AND JUDE, APOSTLES

Strive for decreasing returns

Saints Simon and Jude have countless images and namesakes, yet we know almost nothing about these apostles whose feast day is today. They were among the 12 apostles, and tradition has it they spread the Good News in Persia. We honor their memory anyway, knowing that for the faithful, “He must increase, and I must decrease,” as John the Baptist put it. To be remembered after death as a faithful apostle is not a bad legacy for any Christian! Do one small act today that makes you recognizable as a faithful apostle.

Today's readings:

Ephesians 2:19-22; Luke 6:12-16 (666).

“Jesus went up to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God.”

29OCT 2021

Tender mercies

Depression, anxiety, profound sadness, or grief—these can sometimes make us feel like we’re no good or God has abandoned us. But it is at these times especially when God tenderly draws close to us. Though it may be difficult to lift our hearts in prayer when we are suffering, we can pray this prayer for ourselves and one another (attributed to Saint Augustine): “Watch, O Lord, with those who wake or watch or weep tonight, and give your angels and saints charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ. Rest your weary ones. Bless your dying ones. Soothe your suffering ones. Pity your afflicted ones. Shield your joyous ones. And all for love’s sake.” Amen!

Today's readings:

Romans 9:1-5; Luke 14:1-6 (483).

“I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart.”

30OCT 2021 - MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Room to grow

We’ve all heard that the “humble will be exalted.” Sounds nice, but where can we look for examples, for a role model? Look no further than Mary, Mother of God. Saturday is the traditional day of the week to recall Mary’s example of exalted humility. Mary was humble enough to “make room” for God—literally, in her womb. She was willing to trust God with everything—her reputation, her envisioned marriage, her very body. Do you trust enough to make room so that God can be born in you?

Today's readings:

Romans 11:1-2a, 11-12, 25-29; Luke 14:1, 7-11 (484).

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”