

# 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, November 27, 2022**

*First Sunday of Advent*

## 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 - Matthew 24: 37-44

## Key for Reading:

In the Liturgy of the first Sunday of Advent, the Church places us before an extract of the discourse of Jesus on the end of the world. *Advent* means *Coming*. It is the time of preparation for the coming of the Son of Man into our life. Jesus exhorts us to be vigilant. He asks us to be attentive to the events in order to discover in them the hour of the coming of the Son of Man.

At the beginning of Advent, it is important to purify our look and to learn anew how to read the events in the light of the Word of God. And this in order not to be surprised, because God comes without telling us, when we less expect him. To show how we should be attentive to the events, Jesus goes back to the episode of the deluge in the time of Noah.

During the reading of the text, let us pay attention to the comparisons which Jesus uses to transmit his message.

## A Division of the Text to Help in the Reading:

- Matthew 24: 37-39: The coming of the Son of Man will arrive as in the days of Noah
- Matthew 24: 40-41: Jesus applies the comparison to those who listen
- Matthew 24: 42: The conclusion: "Stay awake"; be "Vigilant"
- Matthew 24: 43-44: A comparison to recommend vigilance.

## The Text:

37 'As it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of man comes. 38 For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, 39 and they suspected nothing till the Flood came and swept them all away. This is what it will be like when the Son of man comes. 40 Then of two men in the fields, one is taken, one left; 41 of two women grinding at the mill, one is taken, one left.

42 'So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. 43 You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. 44 Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

## 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 struck you most? Why?
- Where, when and why did Jesus pronounce this discourse?
- In what exactly does this vigilance consist, to which Jesus exhorts us?
- "One is taken, one left." What does Jesus want to teach with this affirmation?
- At the time of Matthew, the Christian community, in a certain sense, expected the coming of the Son of Man. And today, which is our way of waiting for the coming of Jesus?

- According to you, which is the centre or origin of this teaching of Jesus?

## Going deeper into the Theme

### Context of the Discourse of Jesus:

#### The Gospel of Matthew -

In the Gospel of Matthew there are five great discourses, as if it were a new edition of the five books of the Law of Moses. The text on which we are meditating this Sunday forms part of the fifth Discourse of this New Law, Each one of the preceding four discourses enlightens a determinate aspect of the Kingdom of God announced by Jesus. The first one: the justice of the Kingdom and the conditions to enter into the Kingdom (Mt from 5 to 7). The second one: the mission of the citizens of the Kingdom (Mt 10). The third one: the mysterious presence of the Kingdom in the life of the people (Mt 13). The fourth one: to live the Kingdom in community (Mt 18). The fifth Sermon speaks of vigilance in view of the definitive coming of the Kingdom. In this last discourse, Matthew continues the outline of Mark (cf. Mk 13: 5-37) but adds some parables which speak about the need of vigilance and of service, of solidarity and of fraternity.

#### Waiting for the coming of the Son of Man -

At the end of the first century, the communities lived expecting the immediate coming of Jesus (I Th 5: 1-11). Basing themselves on some words of Paul (I Th 4, 15-18), there were some persons who had ceased to work thinking that Jesus was about to arrive (2 Th 2: 1-2; 3: 11-12). They asked themselves: When Jesus comes, will we be taken up to Heaven as he was? (cfr. I Th 4: 17). Will we be taken or left behind? (cfr. Mt 24: 40- 41). There was an atmosphere similar to that of today, in which many ask themselves: "Is this terrorism a sign that the end of the world is close at hand?" What should we do in order not to be surprised?" An answer to this question and concern comes to us from the words of Jesus which Matthew transmits to us in the Gospel of this Sunday.

#### Comment on the Text:

- Matthew 24: 37-39: Jesus compares the coming of the Son of Man to the days of the deluge  
 "As it was in Noah's day, so it will be when the Son of Man comes." Here, in order to clarify his call to vigilance, Jesus refers to two episodes of the Old Testament: Noah and the Son of Man. The "days of Noah" refer to the description of the deluge (Gen 6: 5 to 8: 14).  
 The image of the "Son of Man" comes from a vision of the prophet Daniel (Dan 7, 13). In the days of Noah, the majority of persons lived without any concern, without being aware that in the events the hour of God was getting near. Life continued "and they were not aware of anything until the deluge came and drowned them all." And Jesus concludes: "Thus it will be when the Son of Man comes." In the vision of Daniel, the Son of Man will come on the clouds unexpectedly and his coming will decree the end of the oppressing empires, which will have no future.
- Matthew 24: 40-41: Jesus applies the comparison to those who listen to him.  
 "Two men will be in the fields: one is taken, one left." These phrases should not be taken literally. It is a way to indicate the diverse destiny that persons will receive according to the justice of the works they did. Some will be taken, that is, will receive salvation, and others will not receive it. This is what happened in the deluge: "You alone

of your contemporaries do I see before me as an upright man" (Gen 7: 1). And Noah and his family were saved.

- Matthew 24: 42: Jesus draws the conclusion: "So stay awake", be vigilant.  
God is the one who determines the hour of the coming of the Son. But God's time is not measured by our clock or calendar. For God one day can be equal to a thousand years, and a thousand years equal to one day (Ps 90; 2 Pt 3: 8). God's time (*kairos*) is independent from our time (*cronos*). We cannot interfere in God's time, but we should be prepared for the moment in which God's hour becomes present in our time. It can be today, it can be from now in one thousand years.
- Matthew 24: 43-44: comparison: the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.  
God comes when we less expect him. It can also happen that He comes and people are not aware of the hour of his arrival. Jesus asks for two things: an always attentive vigilance and at the same time, a peaceful dedication of the one who is in peace. This attitude is a sign of much maturity, in which are mixed the vigilant concern and the serene tranquility. The maturity which succeeds to combine the seriousness of the moment with the awareness that everything is relative.

### **Broadening the Information in Order to Better Understand the Text:**

- **How should we be vigilant to prepare ourselves?** - Our text is preceded by the parable of the fig tree (Mt 24: 32-33). The fig tree was a symbol of the people of Israel (Os 9: 10; Mt 21: 18). In asking to look at the fig tree, Jesus asks to look and to analyze the facts that are taking place. It is as if Jesus would say to us: "You should learn from the fig tree to read the signs of the times, and in this way you would discover where and when God breaks into our history!"
- **The certainty communicated to us by Jesus** - Jesus leaves us a twofold certainty to orientate our journey in life:
  - (1) surely the end will come;
  - (2) certainly, nobody knows anything about the day or hour of the end of the world. "But as for that day and hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels in Heaven nor the Son, no one but the Father alone!" (Mt 24: 36). In spite of all the estimates or calculations that men can do on the date of the end of the world, nobody can calculate with certainty. What gives security is not the knowledge of the hour of the end, but the Word of Jesus present in life. the world will pass but his Word will never pass. (cfr. Is 40: 7-8).
- **When will the end of the world come?** - When the bible speaks about the "end of the World", it refers not to the end of the world, but to the end of a world. It refers to the end of this world, where injustice and the power of evil reign; these which embitter life. This world of injustice will come to an end and in its place there will be "a new heavens and a new earth", announced by Isaiah (Is 65: 15-17) and foreseen in the Apocalypse (Ap 21: 1). Nobody knows when nor how the end of this world will be (Mt 24: 36), because nobody can imagine what God has prepared for those who love him (I Co 2: 9). The new world of life without death exceeds everything, just like the tree exceeds the seed (I Co 15: 35-38). The first Christians were anxious to be present in this end (2 Th 2: 2). They continued to look up at heaven, waiting for the coming of Christ (Acts 1: 11). Some no longer worked (2 Th 3: 11). But "It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority" (Acts 1: 7). The only way to contribute to the coming of the end "in order that the Lord may send the time

of comfort" (Acts 3: 20), and give witness of the Gospel everywhere, to the earth's remotest end (Acts 1: 8).

## Prayer: Psalm 46 (45)

*"God is our refuge! We shall not be afraid!"*

God is both refuge and strength for us, a help always ready in trouble;  
so we shall not be afraid though the earth be in turmoil, though mountains tumble into  
the depths of the sea, and its waters roar and seethe,  
and the mountains totter as it heaves.

There is a river whose streams bring joy to God's city, it sanctifies the dwelling of the  
Most High.

God is in the city, it cannot fall;

at break of day God comes to its rescue. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms are tumbling,  
when he raises his voice the earth crumbles away. Yahweh Sabaoth is with us, our  
citadel,

the God of Jacob.

Come, consider the wonders of Yahweh,

the astounding deeds he has done on the earth;

he puts an end to wars over the whole wide world, he breaks the bow,

he snaps the spear,

shields he burns in the fire.

'Be still and acknowledge that I am God, supreme over nations, supreme over the  
world.'

Yahweh Sabaoth is with us, our citadel, the God of Jacob.

## 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.*

## 27<sup>NOV</sup>2022 - The most wonderful time, indeed

"It's the most wonderful time of the year" as some popular lyrics go, and a lot of us agree. Andy Williams made the tune famous, but composers Eddie Pola and George Wyle wrote it. Ironically, Pola and Wyle were Jewish. Yet they assisted Williams in earning the title "Mr. Christmas" with their composition. The song celebrates holiday parties, caroling, mistletoe, good cheer, and loved ones near. But for believers, the season beginning today is really about anticipation and Incarnation, light illuminating the darkness, and God coming near. We know what time it is. Make this Advent a genuine celebration of hope.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**Today's readings:**

Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:37-44 (1).

*"You know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep."*

## 28<sup>NOV</sup>2022 - Time to get ready!

With the Thanksgiving holiday weekend wrapped up, Catholics yesterday began the Advent journey to Christmas. The word *advent* comes from Latin for "to come." All the days from now until the celebration of the birth of Jesus are preparation for his coming. Preparation in this case means remembering to be ready with a spirit of both penance and joy. Did you set out an Advent wreath on your dinner table yesterday? For many, it's the first of many Christmas decorations to come out—with festooned trees not far behind. The wreath is more than just a pretty adornment but also a daily reminder to pray as you count down each week with a new candle. Start the season out right by  blessing your wreath with a prayer .

ADVENT WEEKDAY

**Today's readings:**

Isaiah 4:2-6; Matthew 8:5-11 (175).

*"Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith."*

## 29<sup>NOV</sup>2022 - Listen with the ear of a child

"Advent is not a time to declare, but to listen, to listen to whatever God may want to tell us through the singing of the stars, the quickening of a baby, the gallantry of a dying man," wrote Christian writer Madeleine L'Engle, born this day in 1918. L'Engle is especially known for her children's books, including *A Wrinkle in Time*, which won the 1963 Newberry Medal. This Advent, consider what it might be like to imitate the Christ Child instead of the adult Jesus. As *A Wrinkle in Time* tells us: "To love is to be vulnerable; and it is only in vulnerability and risk—not safety and security—that we overcome darkness."

ADVENT WEEKDAY

**Today's readings:**

Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21-24 (176).

*"Although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike."*

It's no coincidence that Saint Andrew the Apostle is linked to Advent (which traditionally begins on the Sunday closest to his feast day). In Eastern Christianity he is known as *protokletos*, "first called," because it was Andrew, who had been a disciple of John the Baptist, who persuaded his brother Simon (whom we know as Peter) to follow Jesus with his words, "We have found the Messiah!" Andrew also has a devotion linked to Advent, known as the  Saint Andrew Novena . Try it out and see if it supports and deepens your living out your own call.

FEAST OF ANDREW, APOSTLE

Romans 10:9-18; Matthew 4:18-22 (684). *"At once they left their nets and followed him."*

## 30NOV2022 - Be first to follow the Lord

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FEAST OF ANDREW, APOSTLE

### Today's readings:

Romans 10:9-18; Matthew 4:18-22 (684). *"At once they left their nets and followed him."*

## 01DEC2022 - Build on higher ground

Anyone who has followed the news over the past year has seen more images than ever of people coping with floods. Families waiting on rooftops, people stuffed in boats, neighbors wading through murky water. Jesus constantly used images to make his point, including the image of discipleship as a solid house that stands firm during storms and floods. "Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies," Saint Teresa of Calcutta once said. Are you building a strong, flood-proof house in the small things you do each day?

ADVENT WEEKDAY

### Today's readings:

Isaiah 26:1-6; Matthew 7:21, 24-27 (178). *"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock."*

## 02DEC2022 - Walk with each other

Today, the church remembers martyrs Jean Donovan, Maura Clarke, Dorothy Kazel, and Ita Ford, brutally murdered for standing with the poor in war-torn El Salvador in 1980. Their witness still speaks profoundly to us today as we encounter our own wars, violence, and suffering, especially among the most vulnerable. And still, we struggle to know what to do. Let us take courage as we ponder the questions posed by Ita Ford in 1977: "Am I willing to suffer with the people here, the suffering of the powerless? Can I say to my neighbors, 'I have no solution to this situation. I don't know the answers, but I will walk with you, search with you, be with you?'"

ADVENT WEEKDAY

### Today's readings:

Isaiah 29:17-24; Matthew 9:27-31 (179). *"Let it be done for you according to your faith."*

## 03DEC2022 - Missionizing begins at home

Many of the practices of the great "missionizing projects" of centuries past are seen as problematic in our age, with its greater sensibility of the rights of indigenous peoples to worship freely as they wish. So, while the legacy of one of the patrons of foreign missions, Saint Francis Xavier, is a mixed one, it is significant to note that he always provided for ongoing pastoral care of the communities he missionized and also advocated for an educated native clergy (rather than foreign-born leadership). None of us acts with perfect justice, but each of us finds oneself living in a unique historical moment, called upon to help church and society live up to the best and most noble qualities of our tradition.

MEMORIAL OF FRANCIS XAVIER, JESUIT PRIEST

### Today's readings:

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Matthew 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6-8 (180).

*"At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd."*