

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, March 13, 2022

Second Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send Your Spirit to help us 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 the Father to us and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Luke 9: 28-36

A Key to the Reading:

A few days earlier, Jesus had said that He, the Son of Man, had to be tried and crucified by the authorities (Lk 9: 22; Mk 8: 31). According to the information in the gospels of Mark and Matthew, the disciples, especially Peter, did not understand what Jesus had said and were scandalized by the news (Mt 16: 22; Mk 8: 32). Jesus reacted strongly and turned to Peter calling him Satan (Mt 16: 23; Mk 8: 33). This was because Jesus' words did not correspond with the ideal of the glorious Messiah whom they imagined. Luke does not mention Peter's reaction and Jesus' strong reply, but he does describe, as do the other Evangelists, the episode of the Transfiguration. Luke sees the Transfiguration as

an aid to the disciples so that they may be able to get over the scandal and change their idea of the Messiah (Lk 9: 28-36). Taking the three disciples with Him, Jesus goes up the mountain to pray, and while He is praying, is transfigured. As we read the text, it is good to note what follows: "Who appears with Jesus on the mountain to converse with Him? What is the theme of their conversation? What is the disciples' attitude?"

A Division of the Text as an Aid to the Reading:

- Luke 9: 28: The moment of crisis
- Luke 9: 29: The change that takes place during the prayer
- Luke 9: 30-31: The appearance of the two men and their conversation with Jesus
- Luke 9: 32-34: The disciples' reaction
- Luke 9: 35-36: The Father's voice

The Text:

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But he did not know what he was saying. While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

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 most in this episode of the Transfiguration? Why?
- Who are those who go to the mountain with Jesus? Why do they go?
- Moses and Elijah appear on the mountain next to Jesus. What is the significance of these two people from the Old Testament for Jesus, for the disciples, for the community in the 80s and for us today?
- Which prophecy from the Old Testament is fulfilled in the words of the Father concerning Jesus?
- What is the disciples' attitude during this episode?

- Has there been a transfiguration in your life? How have such experiences of transfiguration helped you to fulfill your mission better?
- Compare Luke's description of the Transfiguration of Jesus (Lk 9: 28-36) with his description of the agony of Jesus in the Garden (Lk 22: 39-46). Try to see whether there are any similarities. What is the significance of these similarities?

A Key to the Reading

for those who wish to go deeper into the theme.

The Context of Jesus' Discourse:

In the two previous chapters of Luke's Gospel, the innovation brought by Jesus highlights the tensions between the New and the Old Testaments. In the end, Jesus realized that no one had understood His meaning, much less His person. People thought that He was like John the Baptist, Elijah or some other prophet (Lk 9: 18-19). The disciples accepted Him as the Messiah, but a glorious Messiah, according to the expectations issued by the government and the official religion of the temple (Lk 9: 20-21). Jesus tried to explain to His disciples that the journey foreseen by the prophets was one of suffering because of its commitment to the excluded, and that a disciple could only be a disciple if he/she took up his/her cross (Lk 9: 22-26). But Jesus did not meet with much success. It is in such a context of crisis that the Transfiguration takes place. In the 30s, the experience of the Transfiguration had a very important significance in the life of Jesus and the disciples. It helped them overcome the crisis of faith and to change their ideals concerning the Messiah. In the 80s, when Luke was writing for the Christian communities in Greece, the meaning of the Transfiguration had already been deepened and broadened. In the light of Jesus' resurrection and of the spread of the Good News among the pagans in almost every country, from Palestine to Italy, the experience of the Transfiguration began to be seen as a confirmation of the faith of the Christian communities in Jesus, *Son of God*. The two meanings are present in the description and interpretation of the Transfiguration in Luke's Gospel.

A Commentary on the Text:

- Luke 9: 28: The moment of crisis.

On several occasions Jesus entered into conflict with the people and the religious and civil authorities of his time (Lk 4: 28-29; 5: 21-20; 6: 2-11; 7:30, 39; 8: 37; 9:9). He knew they would not allow Him to do the things He did. Sooner or later they would catch Him. Besides, in that society, the proclamation of the Kingdom, as Jesus did, was not to be tolerated. He either had to withdraw or face death! There were no other alternatives. Jesus did not withdraw. Hence the cross appears on the horizon, not just as a possibility but as a certainty (Lk 9: 22). Together with the cross there also appears the temptation to go on with the idea of the Glorious Messiah and not of the Crucified, suffering servant, announced by the prophet Isaiah (Mk 8: 32-33). At this difficult moment Jesus goes up the mountain to pray, taking with Him Peter, James,

and John. Through His prayer, Jesus seeks strength not to lose sense of direction in His mission (cf. Mk 1: 35).

- Luke 9: 29: The change that takes place during the prayer.

As soon as Jesus starts praying, His appearance changes and He appears glorious. His face changes and His clothes become white and shining. It is the glory that the disciples imagined for the Messiah. This transformation told them clearly that Jesus was indeed the Messiah expected by all. But what follows the episode of the Transfiguration will point out that the way to glory is quite different from what they imagined. The Transfiguration will be a call to conversion.

- Luke 9: 30-31: Two men appear speaking with Jesus.

Together with Jesus and in the same glorious state there appear Moses and Elijah, the two major exponents of the Old Testament, representing the Law and the Prophets. They speak with Jesus about "the Exodus brought to fulfilment in Jerusalem." Thus, in front of the disciples, the Law and the Prophets confirm that Jesus is truly the glorious Messiah, promised in the Old Testament and awaited by the whole people. They further confirm that the way to glory is through the painful way of the exodus. Jesus' exodus is His passion, death and resurrection. Through His "exodus" Jesus breaks the dominion of the false idea concerning the Messiah spread by the government and by the official religion and that held all ensnared in the vision of a glorious, nationalistic messiah. The experience of the Transfiguration confirmed that Jesus as Messiah Servant constituted an aid to free them from their wrong ideas concerning the Messiah and to discover the real meaning of the Kingdom of God.

- Luke 9: 32-34: The disciples' reaction.

The disciples were in deep sleep. When they woke up, they saw Jesus in His glory and the two men with Him. But Peter's reaction shows that they were not aware of the real meaning of the glory in which Jesus appeared to them. As often happens with us, they were only aware of what concerned them. The rest escapes their attention. "Master, it is good for us to be here!" And they do not want to get off the mountain anymore! When it is question of the cross, whether on the Mount of the Transfiguration or on the Mount of Olives (Lk 22: 45), they sleep! They prefer the glory to the cross! They do not like to speak or hear of the cross. They want to make sure of the moment of glory on the mountain, to extend it, and they offer to build three tents. Peter did not know what he was saying.

While Peter was speaking, a cloud descended from on high and covered them with its shadow. Luke says that the disciples became afraid when the cloud enfolded them. The cloud is the symbol of the presence of God. The cloud accompanied the multitude on their journey through the desert (Ex 40: 34-38; Num 10: 11-12). When Jesus ascended into heaven, He was covered by a cloud and they no longer saw Him (Acts 1: 9). This was a sign that Jesus had entered forever into God's world.

- Luke 9: 35-36: The Father's voice.

A voice is heard from the cloud that says: "This is My Son, the Chosen, listen to Him." With this same sentence the prophet Isaiah had proclaimed the Messiah-Servant (Isa 42: 1). First Moses and Elijah, now God Himself presents Jesus as the Messiah-Servant who will come to glory through the cross. The voice ends with a final admonition: "Listen to Him!" As the heavenly voice speaks, Moses and Elijah disappear and only Jesus is left. This signifies that from now on only He will interpret the scriptures and the will of God. He is the Word of God for the disciples: "Listen to Him!"

- The proclamation "This is My Son, the Chosen; listen to Him" was very important for the community of the late 80s. Through this assertion God the Father confirmed the faith of Christians in Jesus as Son of God. In Jesus' time, that is, in the 30s, the expression Son of Man pointed to a very high dignity and mission. Jesus Himself gave a relative meaning to the term by saying that all were children of God (cf. John 10: 33- 35). But for some the title Son of God became a resume of all titles, over one hundred that the first Christians gave Jesus in the second half of the first century. In succeeding centuries, it was the title of Son of God that the Church concentrated all its faith in the person of Jesus.

A Deepening:

- The Transfiguration is told in three of the Gospels: Matthew (Mt 17: 1-9), Mark (Mk 9: 2-8) and Luke (Lk 9: 28-36). This is a sign that this episode contained a very important message. As we said, it was a matter of great help to Jesus, to His disciples and to the first communities. It confirmed Jesus in His mission as Messiah-Servant. It helped the disciples to overcome the crisis that the cross and suffering caused them. It led the communities to deepen their faith in Jesus, Son of God, the One who revealed the Father and who became the new key to the interpretation of the Law and the Prophets. The Transfiguration continues to be of help in overcoming the crisis that the cross and suffering provoke today. The three sleeping disciples are a reflection of all of us. The voice of the Father is directed to us as it was to them: "This is My Son, the Chosen; listen to Him!"
- In Luke's Gospel there is a great similarity between the scene of the Transfiguration (Lk 9: 28-36) and the scene of the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Olives (Lk 22: 39-46). We may note the following: in both scenes Jesus goes up the mountain to pray and takes with Him three disciples, Peter, James and John. On both occasions, Jesus' appearance is transformed and He is transfigured before them; glorious at the Transfiguration, perspiring blood in the Garden of Olives. Both times heavenly figures appear to comfort Him, Moses and Elijah and an angel from heaven. Both in the Transfiguration and in the Agony, the disciples sleep, they seem to be outside the event and they seem not to understand anything. At the end of both episodes, Jesus is reunited with His disciples. Doubtless, Luke intended to emphasize the resemblance between these two episodes. What would that be? Perhaps it is to show

that understanding takes time and effort, even for the Apostles, so we should persevere and not be asleep, especially at those crucial moments in our lives when He is revealing Himself to us personally. It is in meditating and praying that we shall come to understand the meaning that goes beyond words, and to perceive the intention of the author. The Holy Spirit will guide us.

- Luke describes the Transfiguration. There are times in our life when suffering is such that we might think: "God has abandoned me! He is no longer with me!" And then suddenly we realize that He has never deserted us, but that we had our eyes bandaged and were not aware of the presence of God. Then everything is changed and transfigured. It is the transfiguration! This happens every day in our lives.

Psalm 42 (41)

"My soul thirsts for the living God!"

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for Thee, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?

My tears have been my food day and night,

while men say to me continually, "Where is your God?" These things I remember, as I pour out my soul:

how I went with the throng,

and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,

a multitude keeping festival.

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my help and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;

therefore I remember Thee from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

Deep calls to deep at the roar of Your torrents; all Thy waves and breakers have gone over me.

By day the Lord commands His steadfast love; and at night His song is with me,

a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God, my rock:

"Why hast Thou forgotten me?

Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" As with a deadly wound in my body,

my adversaries taunt me,

while they say to me continually, "Where is your God?"

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my help and my God.

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.

13MAR2022 - SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

A heart-warming witness

She was divorced—twice. Mary Clarke Brenner (1926-2013) lived in Beverly Hills: not an address associated with holy living. Yet this remarkable woman would go on to become the “Prison Angel,” dedicating her life to criminals in a maximum-security jail. Mother Antonia, as she was later known, didn't just visit the incarcerated; she moved into the jail and lived among them for years. Others sought to imitate her generous spirit and formed the Eudist Servants of the Eleventh Hour—mindful that any of us might need saving in the end. “Warm the coldest heart,” was her prayer. Pray for prison ministries.

Today's readings:

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18; Philippians 3:17—4:1; Luke 9:28b-36 (27).

“Abram put his faith in the LORD, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness.”

14MAR2022 - LENTEN WEEKDAY

Take a reverent knee in solidarity

The BBC named 45-year-old Xaverian Sister Ann Rose Nu Tawng of Myanmar among the news agency's list of “100 inspiring and influential woman from around the world” for 2021. Stunning news photos and videos showed her kneeling with arms outstretched before security forces, asking them to shoot her instead of peaceful protesters of the country's military takeover. Two of the armed police dropped to their knees and folded their hands. On this, the last day of National Catholic Sisters Week, it's a dramatic example of the selfless sacrifice of religious women who give their lives in service to and love of Christ. The vast majority don't become sensations for their acts, but they are still heroes.

Today's readings:

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

“For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”

15MAR2022 - LENTEN WEEKDAY

A cardinal's titular role

It was a huge honor for the United States when—on this day in 1875—Pope Pius IX elevated New York's Archbishop John McCloskey to become the first-ever cardinal from the United States. It meant American Catholics finally had a seat at the table. All cardinals belong to the College of Cardinals, which elects and counsels the pope. And all cardinals automatically assume honorary leadership of dioceses and parishes around Rome—meaning they, too, could be promoted bishop of Rome one day. While our church preserves such hierarchical traditions, God sees beyond rank to the quality of service we render, regardless of station. Pray for all to serve the church with wisdom and love.

Today's readings:

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

“Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Christ.”

16MAR2022 - LENTEN WEEKDAY

Be bold in your witness for justice

On this day in 1877, the renowned black Catholic scholar and activist Dr. Thomas Wyatt Turner was born in Hughesville, Maryland. The first African American to earn a Ph.D. in botany (or in any subject from Cornell University), Turner would go on to co-found both the NAACP in 1909 and the Federated Colored Catholics in 1924. Via both organizations, he would lobby to end segregation at the Catholic University of America as well as in U.S. seminaries (especially that of the Josephites, an order founded to serve African Americans). He died in 1978 at the age of 101. May his legacy be for all of us a model of defiant witness for the oppressed.

Today's readings:

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

"Remember that I stood before you to speak in their behalf."

17MAR2022 - MEMORIAL OF PATRICK, BISHOP, MISSIONARY

Have you answered the call?

In the modern Western world, middle-class people rarely face death by starvation or religious persecution. Saint Patrick, the great evangelizer of Ireland in the 600s, faced both these threats when he finally acted on his long-avoided calling to bring the Christian message to the people of Ireland. Have you ever inconvenienced yourself to carry out something God called you to? Take a moment today to reflect on your own calling in life and the sacrifice it entails.

Today's readings:

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

"If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead."

18MAR2022 - MEMORIAL OF CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

The doctor prescribes some "me time"

In a series of lectures known as the *Catechesis*, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem instructed fourth-century catechumens in the faith. His lessons continue to be enlightening: "The present is the season of confession," Cyril writes of Lent. "Confess what thou hast done in word or in deed. . . . Forsake things present and put your trust in things to come. Have you run so many circles [over] the years busied in vain about the world, and have you not 40 days to be free for prayer, for your own soul's sake? 'Be still, and know that I am God,' says the Scripture. . . . You are running for yourself, see to your own interest." Note well: You have the permission of a saint and doctor of the church to go off the grid for a time and tend to your own spiritual well-being.

Today's readings:

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

"Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing."

19MAR2022 - SOLEMNITY OF JOSEPH, HUSBAND OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

First spouse

On May 1, 2013, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments instructed that the name of Saint Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, be inserted into all the Eucharistic Prayers of the Mass. So now when the priest invokes the name of the Mother of God during the prayers at the altar, he includes "with Blessed Joseph, her spouse." Joseph is our model of the just man, the good husband. Pray for husbands everywhere, that Joseph be their model and a source of strength.

Today's readings:

2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22; Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a or Luke 2:41-51a (543).

"He did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home."