

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, July 3, 2020

14th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

"Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind with which 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 suffering and death. Thus, the cross which had seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the resurrection and source of new life.

Create in us silence so that we may listen to your voice in Creation, 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 power 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:

Jesus' preaching draws many people (Mk 3: 7-8). A small community begins to form around him. At first, two persons (Mk 1: 16-18); then another two (Mk 1: 19-20); then twelve (Mk 3: 13- 19); and now in our text, more than seventy-two persons (Lk 10: 1). The community continues to grow. One thing Jesus insists on is community life. He set the example. He never wished to work alone. The first thing he did at the beginning of his preaching in Galilee was to call people to live with him and share in his mission (Mk 1: 16-20; 3: 14). The ambience of fraternity that grows around Jesus is a **foretaste of the Kingdom**, a proof of the new experience of God with the Father. Thus, if God is Father and Mother, then we are all one family of brothers and sisters. Thus is the community born, the new family (cf. Mk 3: 34-35).

This Sunday's Gospel tells us of practical things to direct the seventy-two disciples in their proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom and in rebuilding community life. Proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom and rebuilding community life are two sides of the same coin. One does not exist and cannot make sense without the other. While reading the text, try to look for this connection between community life and the proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

A Division of the Text to Help with the Reading:

- Luke 10: 1: The Mission
- Luke 10: 2-3: Co-responsibility
- Luke 10: 4-6: Hospitality
- Luke 10: 7: Sharing
- Luke 10: 8: Communion around the table
- Luke 10: 9^a: Welcoming those excluded
- Luke 10: 9^b: The coming of the Kingdom
- Luke 10: 10-12: Wiping the dust from their feet
- Luke 10: 17-20: The names written in heaven

Text:

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting. 2 And he said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the laborers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to do his harvesting. 3 Start off now, but look, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. 4 Take no purse with you, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you enter, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" 6 And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. 7 Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the laborer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. 8 Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you. 9 Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you." 10 But whenever you enter a town and they do not make you welcome, go out into its streets and say, 11 "We wipe off the very dust of your town that clings to our feet, and leave it with you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God is very near." 12 I tell you, on the great Day it will be more bearable for Sodom than for that town. 17 The seventy-two came back rejoicing. 'Lord,' they said, 'even the devils submit to us when we use your name.' 18 He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Look, I have given you power to tread down serpents and scorpions and the whole strength of the enemy; nothing shall ever hurt you. 20 Yet do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you; rejoice instead that your names are written in heaven.'

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 pleased or struck you most in this text? Why?
- Name each of the things that Jesus tells the disciples to do and the things to avoid.
- What does Jesus wish to clarify through each of these suggestions so different from those common in everyday life?
- How can we put into practice what the Lord asks: "take no purse with you", "do not move from house to house", "salute no one on the road", "wipe off the very dust from your feet"?
- Why are these suggestions of Jesus a sign of the coming of the Kingdom of God?
- Jesus tells us to be attentive to the most important thing when he says: "your names are written in heaven!" What does this mean for us?

To Go Deeper into the Theme

The Literary and Historical Context:

A little before our text, in Luke 9: 51, is the beginning of the second phase of Jesus' apostolic activities, that is, a long journey to Jerusalem (Lk 9: 51 to 19: 29). The first phase took place in Galilee and began with the presentation of Jesus' programme in the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk 4: 14-21). In the second phase, he goes to Samaria, sends messengers ahead of him (Lk 9: 52) and draws new disciples (Lk 9: 57-62). The second phase begins with the appointment of the other 72 disciples and with the presentation of the program that will guide them in their missionary activities (Lk 10: 1-16). Thus, Luke suggests that these new disciples are not Jews from Galilee but Samaritans, and that the place where Jesus proclaims the Good News is no longer Galilee but Samaria, the territory of the excluded. The aim of the mission given to the disciples is the rebuilding of community life. In Jesus' days, many movements tried new ways of life and of sharing life: the Pharisees, the Essenes, the Zealots, John the Baptist and others. Many formed communities of disciples (Jn 1: 35; Lk 11: 1; Acts 19: 3) and had their missionaries (Mt 23: 15). But there was one great difference. The communities of Pharisees, for instance, lived apart from people. The community around Jesus lives among the people. Jesus' proposal to the 72 disciples is to recover the old community values that were being lost, like hospitality, welcoming, sharing, communion around the table, accepting the excluded. Jesus tries to renew and reorganize communities in such a way that they may become an expression of the Covenant, an expression of the Kingdom of God.

A Commentary on the Text:

- Luke 10: 1: The Mission
Jesus sends the disciples to the places he would be visiting. The disciple is Jesus' spokesperson. He is not the master of the Good News. Jesus sends them in pairs. This allows for mutual help and thus the mission is not that of an individual but of the community. Two persons represent the community better.

- Luke 10: 2-3: Co-responsibility
 Their first task is to ask God to send laborers. All of Jesus' disciples must feel responsible for the mission. Thus, they have to pray to the Father for the continuance of the mission. Jesus sends his disciples like lambs among wolves. The mission is a difficult and dangerous task. The system within which they lived and within which we still live continues to resist the reorganization of people living in community. Anyone who, like Jesus, proclaims love in a society organized on individual and collective selfishness, will be a lamb among wolves and will be crucified.
- Luke 10: 4-6: Hospitality
 Jesus' disciples may not take anything with them, no purse, no sandals. All they can take with them is peace. This means that they had to rely on the *hospitality* of the people. Thus, the disciple who goes carrying nothing but peace, shows he trusts people. He thinks that he will be accepted and that thus people will feel respected and confirmed. In this way the disciples were criticizing the laws concerning exclusion and brought out the old values of community sharing of the people of God. Salute no one on the road means that they must not waste time with matters not pertaining to the mission. This may be a reference to the episode of the death the Sunamite's son, where Elisha says to his employee, "Go! If anyone salutes you, do not answer" (2 Kings 4: 29), because this was a matter of life and death. Proclaiming God's Good News is a matter of life and death!
- Luke 10: 7: Sharing
 The disciples must not move from house to house but must stay in the same house. They must live together with and share in the life and work of the local people, and live on what they receive in exchange, the laborer deserves his wages. This means that they must trust in *sharing*. Through this new practice, they recovered one of the old traditions of the people of God, criticizing a culture of accumulation that was characteristic of the Roman Empire and so proclaimed a new model for people to live together.
- Luke 10: 8: Communion around the table
 The disciples must take what food and drink they offer. When the Pharisees went on a mission, they went prepared. They took with them purse and money so that they could provide for their own food. They maintained that they could not trust the food of the people because it was not always ritually "pure." Thus, the observance of the Law of legal purity, instead of helping to overcome divisions, weakened the life of communitarian values. Jesus' disciples must not be separate from the people but rather accept *communion around the table*. When coming into contact with people they were not to be afraid of losing legal purity. The community value of fraternal living together is greater than the observance of ritual norms. By acting thus, they criticised the current laws on purity, and proclaimed a new way to purity, to intimacy with God.
- Luke 10:9^a: Welcoming those excluded
 The disciples must look after the sick, cure lepers and drive out evil spirits (cf Mt 10:8). This means that they must welcome into the community those who had been excluded from it. The practice of solidarity is a criticism of a society that excluded a person from the rest of the community. And thus, is recovered the ancient prophetic tradition of *goél*. From earliest times, the strength of the clan or the community was revealed in its defense of the value of a person, a family and the possession of land, and was concretely practiced every "seven times seven years" in the celebration of the jubilee year (Lv 25: 8-55; Dt 15: 1-18).
- Luke 10: 9^b: The coming of the Kingdom

Hospitality, sharing, communion around the table, welcoming the excluded (*goêl*) were four pillars for sustaining community life. But because of the difficult situation of poverty, unemployment, persecution and oppression from the Romans, these pillars were broken. Jesus wants to rebuild them and affirms that, if they go back to these four values, the disciples can proclaim to the four winds: The Kingdom of God is very near to you! Proclaiming the Kingdom does not mean teaching truth and doctrine but bringing people to a new way of living and sharing, a new way of acting and thinking, based on the Good News that Jesus proclaims: God is Father and therefore we are all together brothers and sisters.

- Luke 10: 10-12: Wiping the dust from their feet
How can we understand such a hard threat? Jesus came to bring an entirely new thing. He came to recover the communitarian values of the past: hospitality, sharing, communion around the table and welcoming the excluded. This explains the severity of the words used against those who refuse to accept the message. They are not refusing something new, but their own past, their own culture and wisdom! Jesus' plan for the 72 disciples was aimed at digging up the memory, recovering the communitarian values of the oldest tradition, to rebuild the community and renew the Covenant, to renew life and thus to make God the new great Good News in the life of people.
- Luke 10: 17-20: The names written in heaven
The disciples come back from the mission and get together with Jesus to evaluate what they had done. They begin by telling their stories. With great joy, they inform him that, in the name of Jesus, they were able to drive out evil spirits! Jesus helps them in their discernment. If they were able to drive out evil spirits, it was because Jesus had given them that power. While they stay with Jesus, no evil can come to them. And Jesus says that the most important thing was not driving out evil spirits, but that their names are written in heaven. To have one's name written in heaven means to be certain of being known and loved by the Father. Sometime before this, James and John had asked to bring down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans (Lk 9: 54). Now, through the proclamation of the Good News, Satan falls from heaven (Lk 10: 18) and the names of the Samaritan disciples are entered in heaven! In those days, many thought that whatever was Samaritan was of the devil, of Satan (Jn 8: 48). Jesus changes everything!

Further information:

The small communities being formed in Galilee and in Samaria are above all "a foretaste of the Kingdom". The community around Jesus is like the face of God transformed into New News for the people, above all for the poor. Is our community like this?

Here are some characteristics of the community that grew around Jesus. These are characteristics of the face of God revealed in them. They may act as a mirror for the revision of our community:

- "You have only one master, and you are all brothers" (Mt 23: 8). The foundation of the community is not knowledge or power, but equality among the brothers and sisters. It is *fraternity*.
- Jesus insists on *equality between men and women* (Mt 19: 7-12) and gives orders to men and women (Mt 28: 10; Mk 16: 9-10; Jn 20: 17). They all "follow" Jesus from Galilee (Mk 15: 41; Lk 8: 2-3).

- They had a common house shared with the poor (Jn 13: 29). This *sharing* must reach the soul and heart of all (Acts 1: 14; 4: 32). It must reach the point that there are no secrets among them (Jn 15: 15).
- *The power of service.* "Anyone who wants to be first among you, must be slave to all!" (Mk 10: 44). Jesus sets the example (Jn 13: 15). "The Son of man came not be served, but to serve" (Mt 20: 28). "Here am I among as one who serves" (Lk 22: 27). "We are useless servants!" (Lk 17: 10)
- Because of many conflicts and divisions, Jesus insists that the community be a place of forgiveness and reconciliation, not of mutual condemnation (Mt 18: 21-22; Lk 17: 3-4). The power to forgive was given to Peter (Mt 16: 19), the apostles (Jn 20: 23) and the communities (Mt 18:18). God's pardon is passed on to the community.
- They prayed *together* in the Temple (Jn 2: 13; 7: 14; 10: 22-23). Sometimes Jesus forms smaller groups (Lk 9: 28; Mt 26: 36-37). They pray before meals (Mk 6: 41; Lk 24: 30) and frequent the synagogues (Lk 4: 16).
- *Joy* that no one can take away (Jn 16: 20-22) "Blessed are you!" Your name is written in heaven (Lk 10: 20), their eyes will see what has been promised (Lk 10: 23-24), the Kingdom is yours! (Lk 6: 20).

The community around Jesus is the model for the early Christians after the resurrection (Acts 2: 42-47)! The community is like the face of God transformed into Good News for the people.

Praying the Psalm 146 (145)

The Face of God, Confirmed by Jesus

Alleluia! Praise Yahweh, my soul! I will praise Yahweh all my life,
 I will make music to my God as long as I live. Do not put your trust in princes,
 in any child of Adam, who has no power to save.
 When his spirit goes forth he returns to the earth, on that very day all his plans come to nothing.
 How blessed is he who has Jacob's God to help him, his hope is in Yahweh his God,
 who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them. He keeps faith forever,
 gives justice to the oppressed, gives food to the hungry; Yahweh sets prisoners free.
 Yahweh gives sight to the blind, lifts up those who are bowed down. Yahweh protects the stranger,
 he sustains the orphan and the widow. Yahweh loves the upright,
 but he frustrates the wicked.
 Yahweh reigns forever, your God, Zion, from age to age.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you for your Word that has clarified for us the will of the Father. Grant that your Spirit may enlighten our actions and give us the strength to put into practice that which your Word has revealed to us. Grant that we, like Mary, your Mother, may not only listen to your Word but also put it into practice. Who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.



Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time.

03JUL2022

We are blessed

This land is a favored patch of Earth. "From the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans white with foam," as Irving Berlin's anthem goes, may God bless this place we call the United States of America. Berlin's song is both patriotic and prayerful, which is why it's sometimes sung in church. He originally wrote it for a play, then set it aside for 20 years, resurrecting it as the Third Reich came to power and the world needed an inspirational song. (Woody Guthrie didn't like it and wrote "This Land Is Your Land" in response.) However you choose to sing it, croon a song of gratitude for your country.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Today's readings:

Isaiah 66:10-14c; Galatians 6:14-18; Luke 10:1-12, 17-20 ([102](#)).

"Lo, I will spread prosperity over Jerusalem like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing torrent."

04JUL2022

Red, white, blue, and Catholic

Catholics were a small minority in America's colonial period—at the end of the Revolutionary War, there were only about 25,000 Catholics in the United States out of a total population of 3 million. Catholics faced persecution, first in the original colonies, and then in the new country that was ironically founded in part on freedom of religion. Today there are 70 million Catholics in the United States, or 22 percent of the population, and for many years Catholics have made up about a third of the U.S. Congress—more than any other denomination. With the values of our faith, Catholics have made countless contributions to the betterment of our country through myriad kinds of service—what's yours?

OPTIONAL PROPER MASS FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY (USA) (887-891)

Today's readings:

Hosea 2:16, 17b-18, 21-22; Matthew 9:18-26 ([383](#)).

"Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you."

05JUL2022

Sweet is the rose

Saint Elizabeth of Portugal belongs to a saintly tradition called a "miracle of the roses." Elizabeth was caught smuggling provisions from the family larder to give to the poor, food hidden under her cloak to elude disapproving relatives. When confronted by a suspicious husband and ordered to reveal what she was hiding, roses tumbled from her wrap instead of bread. Many saints, including Juan Diego, Dorothy, and Rita of Cascia also had miraculous encounters with roses. Pope John Paul II once pointed out that the thorns of these roses remind us of worldly trials—but their enduring fragrance represents the love of Christ.

MEMORIAL OF ELIZABETH OF PORTUGAL, QUEEN, THIRD ORDER FRANCISCAN

Today's readings:

Hosea 8:4-7, 11-13; Matthew 9:32-38 ([384](#)).

"The crowds were amazed and said, 'Nothing like this has ever been seen.'"

06JUL2022

Tap into the riches of diversity

On this day in 2017, the most recent gathering of the National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) began in Orlando, Florida. The NBCC was founded by African-American Catholics as a successor to Daniel Rudd's Colored Catholic Congress movement, which had been dormant since 1894. Since 1987, the NBCC has gathered black Catholics from around the United States every five years for fellowship and to discuss a pastoral plan to be published by the Congress after each meeting. The NBCC is governed by the nation's black bishops, a group active since the first ones were appointed in the late 20th century. May we all draw deeply from the wellspring of our cultural heritage to enrich the church.

Today's readings:

Hosea 10:1-3, 7-8, 12; Matthew 10:1-7 (385).

"You descendants of Abraham, his servants, sons of Jacob, his chosen ones! He, the LORD, is our God."

07JUL2022

Adventures in pursuit of the reign of God

Today's gospel begins with Jesus' command that his apostles declare the "kingdom of heaven is at hand." Pope Francis has noted that seeking the reign of God involves boldness and adventure. Seeking the Kingdom, he once told a Sunday Angelus audience, is the "opposite of a dull life: it is a treasure that renews life every day and leads it to extend towards wider horizons." Those seeking the reign of God, he continued, "have a creative and inquisitive heart" leading them to "new paths" for loving God, neighbor, and themselves. Has your quest for the Kingdom taken you on unexpected journeys?

Today's readings:

Hosea 11:1-4, 8c-9; Matthew 10:7-15 (386).

"Jesus said to his Apostles: 'As you go, make this proclamation: 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

08JUL2022

Branch out

Chances are you're spending some time outside this summer, enjoying the glories of nature. One ancient tree worth noting is the cedar, which has deep spiritual roots in Hebrew and Christian tradition. The height and breadth of the mighty cedar of Lebanon are associated with the greatness of God. It is long-lived, evergreen, fruit-bearing, and a place of refuge—all characteristics of Yahweh and Mary, in her role as Mother of God and protectress of the church. The next time you feel vulnerable or distant from God, call to mind the grand cedar and know that divine comfort awaits if only you seek its reach.

Today's readings:

Hosea 14:2-10; Matthew 10:16-23 (387).

"He shall strike root like the Lebanon cedar, and put forth his shoots."

09JUL2022

Creed and culture are not the same

European missionaries were pouring into China during the 19th century, bringing with them not only the Christian religion, but also the European culture that they believed was part and parcel of the practice of the faith. Chinese reception of Christianity was mixed. Many Chinese saw it as a cultural invasion since some missionaries condemned customary Chinese practices like veneration of ancestors as demon worship. Augustine Zhao Rong represents 87 Chinese Catholics and 33 Western missionaries who were killed during a period of anti-foreigner resentment that followed. Be mindful that your evangelizing always be accompanied by respect and sensitivity.

MEMORIAL OF AUGUSTINE ZHAO RONG, PRIEST, MARTYR, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

Today's readings:

Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 10:24-33 (388).

"It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher."