

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 17, 2022

16th Sunday in 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 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 – Luke 10: 38-42

A Key to the Reading:

The text of the Gospel for this Sunday narrates the visit of Jesus to the house of Martha and Mary. Jesus tells Martha: *"Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her!"* Throughout the centuries, many times these words have been interpreted as a confirmation on the part of Jesus of the fact that contemplative life, hidden in the monasteries, is better and more sublime than the active life of those who work in the field of evangelization. This interpretation is not very correct, because it lacks the foundation of the text. In order to understand the significance of these words of Jesus (and of any word) it is important to take into account, to consider the context, that is, the context of the Gospel of Luke as well as the broader context of the work of Luke which includes the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Before verifying the broader context of the Acts of the Apostles, let us try to gaze a bit at the text in itself and try to see how it is placed in the immediate context of the Gospel of Luke.

During the reading, try to feel that you are present in Mary's house and feel close to the environment and to the outreach or importance of the words of Jesus, not only as Martha hears them but also as the community for which Luke writes his Gospel hears them and also how we hear them, us, who today hear these such inspiring words of Jesus.

A Division of the Text to Help in the Reading:

- Luke 10: 38: Martha welcomes Jesus into her house
- Luke 10: 39-40a: Mary listens to the words of Jesus, Martha is busy with the service in the house
- Luke 10: 40b: Martha complains and asks Jesus to intervene
- Luke 10: 41-42: Answer of Jesus

Text:

38 In the course of their journey he came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. 40 Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' 41 But the Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, 42 and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her.'

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 is the point in this text which pleased you the most or struck you? Why?
- What would Jesus want to say with that affirmation: “one thing alone is necessary”?
- Which was the “better part” which Mary chose and which will not be taken from her?
- A historical event can have a more profound symbolical sense. Did you succeed in discovering a symbolical sense in the way in which Luke describes Jesus’ visit to the house of Martha and Mary?
- Read attentively Acts 6: 1-6 and try to discover the bond of union between the problem of the apostles and the conversation of Jesus with Martha.

To Go Deeper into the Theme

Context of the Gospel of Luke:

In Luke 9, 51 begins the second stage of the apostolic activity of Jesus, the long journey from Galilee up to Jerusalem. At the beginning of the journey, Jesus gets out of the Jewish world and enters into the world of the Samaritans (Lk 9, 52). Even though He is not well received by the Samaritans (Lk 9, 53), He continues in their territory and even corrects the Disciples who think differently (Lk 9, 54-55). In responding to those who ask to follow Him, Jesus makes explicit the significance of everything that has happened, and indicates to them the demands of the mission (Lk 9, 56-62).

Then Jesus appoints other seventy-two disciples to go on mission before Him. The sending out of the twelve (Lk 9, 1-6) was in the world of the Jews. The sending out of the seventy-two is for the non Jewish world. Having finished the mission, Jesus and the Disciples meet and evaluate the mission, and the Disciples give an account of the many activities that they carried out, but Jesus insists on the greatest certainty that their names are written in Heaven (Lk 10, 17-37).

Then follows our text which describes the visit of Jesus to the house of Martha and Mary (Lk 10, 38-42). Luke does not specifically indicate where the village of Martha and Mary is found, but in the geographical context of his Gospel, the reader imagines that the village is found in Samaria. From the Gospel of John we know that Martha and Mary lived in Bethany, a small village near Jerusalem (Jn 11, 1). Besides, John tells us that they had a brother named Lazarus.

Comment on the Text:

- Luke 10, 38: Martha welcomes Jesus into her house
“In the course of the journey, he came to a village and, a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house” Jesus was on the way. Luke does not always say where Jesus was passing by, but many times that Jesus is on the way (Lk 9: 51, 53-57; 10: 1, 38; 11: 1; 13: 22, 23; 14: 25; 17: 11; 18: 31, 35; 19: 1, 11, 28, 29, 41, 45; 20: 1). Because Jesus was firmly decided to go up to Jerusalem (Lk 9: 51). This decision orientates Him during all the stages of the journey. The entrance into the village and into the house of Martha and Mary is a stage more of this long journey up to Jerusalem and forms part of the realization of Jesus’ mission. From the beginning, the objective of the journey is definitive: to carry out His mission of Servant, announced by Isaiah (Is 53: 2-10; 61: 1-2) and assumed by Jesus in Nazareth (Lk 4: 16-21).
- Luke 10: 39-40a: Mary listened to his words, Martha was taken up with the service.
“She had a sister, named Mary, who sitting at the feet of Jesus, listened to his word; Martha, instead was all taken up with all the serving”. A normal supper at home, in

the family. While some speak, others prepare the food. The two tasks are important and necessary, both complement one another, especially when it is a question of welcoming someone who is coming from outside. In affirming that "Martha was all taken up with all the serving" (*diaconia*), Luke evokes the seventy-two disciples who were also busy with many activities of the missionary service (Lk 10: 17-18).

- Luke 10: 40b: Martha complains and asks Jesus to intervene.
 "Martha came to him and said: 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the service all by myself? Please tell her to help me'" Another familiar scene, but not so normal. Martha is busy only with the preparation of the food, while Mary is sitting, and is speaking with Jesus. Martha complains. Perhaps Jesus interferes and says something to the sister to see if she will help her in the service in the *diaconia*. Martha considers herself a servant and thinks that the service of a servant is that of preparing the food and that her service in the kitchen is more important than that of her sister who is speaking with Jesus. For Martha, what Mary does is not a service, because she says: "Do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the service all by myself?" But Martha is not the only servant. Jesus also assumes his role as servant, that is of the Servant announced by the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah had said that the principal service of the Servant is that of being before God in prayer listening in order to be able to discover a word of comfort to take to those who are discouraged. The Servant said: "The Lord God has given me a disciple's tongue, for me to know how to give a word of comfort to the weary. Morning by morning he makes my ear alert to listen like a disciple" (Is 50: 4). Now, Mary has an attitude of prayer before Jesus. And the question arises: Who carries out the service of a servant better: Martha or Mary?
- Luke 10: 41-42: Response of Jesus
 "The Lord then answered: 'Martha, Martha, you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken from her'" A beautiful answer and a very human one. For Jesus, a good conversation with persons, who are friends is important and even more important than eating (cf. Jn 4: 32). Jesus does not agree with the worries of Martha. He does not want that the preparation of the meal interrupt the conversation. and it is as if he would say: "Martha, it is not necessary to prepare so many things! A small thing suffices! And then come to participate in such a beautiful conversation!" This is the principal significance, so simple and human of the words of Jesus. Jesus likes a good conversation. and a good *conversation* with Jesus produces *conversion*. But in the context of the Gospel of Luke, these decisive words of Jesus assume a more profound symbolical significance:
- Like Martha, the disciples also, during the mission, were worried about many things, but Jesus clarifies well that the more important thing is that of having their names written in Heaven, that is, to be known and loved by God (Lk 10: 20). Jesus repeats to Martha: "You worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one.
- A short time before the Doctor of the Law had reduced the commandments to one alone: "To love the Lord God above all things and your neighbor as yourself" (Lk 10, 27). Observing this only and better commandment, the person will be ready to act with love, like the Good Samaritan and not like the priest or the Levite who do not fulfil their duty well (Lk 10, 25-42). The many services of Martha should be carried out beginning by this unique service truly necessary which is the loving attention to persons. This is the better part that Mary has chosen and which will not be taken from her.
- Martha is concerned about serving (*diaconia*). She wanted to be helped by Mary in the service of the table. But which is the service which God wants? This is the

fundamental question. Mary is more in agreement with the attitude of the Servant of God, because, like the Servant, she is now in the attitude of prayer before Jesus. Mary cannot abandon her attitude of prayer in the presence of God. Because if she would do this, she would not discover the word of comfort to take to those who are wearied. This is the true service which God is asking from all.

Broadening the information:

A broader context of the Acts of the Apostles

After the death and resurrection of Jesus the communities will be born. They will have to face new problems, for which they did not have solutions already foreseen. In order to orientate themselves in the solutions to the problems, the communities tried to remember the words and gestures of Jesus which could bring them some light. Thus, the episode of the visit of Jesus to the house of Martha and Mary was recalled and narrated in order to help clarify the problem described in Acts 6: 1-6.

The rapid growth in the number of Christians created divisions in the community. The faithful of Greek origin began to complain of those of Hebrew origin and said that their widows were set aside, neglected, in the daily life. There was discrimination in the environment of the community and persons were lacking for the various services. Up to that moment the need had not arisen to involve other persons in the coordination of the community and in the fulfilment of the services. Like Moses, after leaving Egypt (Ex 18: 14; Num 11: 14-15), the Apostles also did everything alone. But Moses, obliged by the facts, shared the power and convoked other seventy leaders for the necessary services among the People of God (Ex 18: 17-23; Num 11: 16-17). Jesus had done the same thing: he convoked other seventy-two disciples (Lk 10: 1). Now, in the face of new problems, the Apostles did the same. They convoked the community and exposed the problem before everyone. Without doubt, the word of Jesus to Martha helped them to reach a solution. The Apostles find themselves between two real needs, both of them very important, defined as service (*diaconia*): the service of the Word and the service of the tables. What to do? Which of the two is more important? The response of Jesus to Martha helped to discern the problem. Jesus said that Mary could not abandon the conversation with Him in order to go and help in the kitchen. Thus, Peter concludes: It would not be right for us to neglect the Word of God so as to give out food! And Peter defines the service of the Apostolate: "to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word."

It is not said that one service is better than the other. What cannot happen is that the service of the Word be hindered by the unforeseen demands of the service at the table. The community was obliged to face the problem, be concerned to have enough people for all the services, so as to be able, to converse, thus, the service of the Word in its integrity. The service of the word proper of the Apostles (and of Mary at the feet of Jesus) had two dimensions: on the one side the listening to the Word, receiving it, incarnating it, announcing it, diffusing it through the active work of evangelization and, on the other side, in the name of the community, respond to God in prayer, represent the community in a prayerful attitude before God. It is not a question of an opposition between the two services: word and table. Both are important and necessary for the life of the community. It is necessary to have persons available for both of them. In the economy of the Kingdom, besides, the service of the Word (Evangelization) is the root, the source. It is the better part which Mary has chosen. The service of the table is the result, the fruit, it is its revelation. For Luke and for the first Christians, "the better part" of which Jesus speaks to Martha, is the service of evangelization, source of all the rest.

Mestre Eckhart, the great Dominican mystic of the Middle Ages interprets this episode in a very amusing way. He says that Martha already knew how to work and to live in the presence of God. Mary did not know and was learning. This is why she could not be interrupted. The great mystics are the proof that this text cannot be interpreted like a

confirmation on the part of Jesus that contemplative life is better and more sublime than active life. It is not well to make a distinction of these two words, because one is completed, is founded and is made explicit in the other. The Carmelite Saint John of the Cross in a little more than ten years he travelled 27,000 kilometres going through Spain. Saint Teresa of Avila was always on the move, very busy as she was with the foundation of so many monasteries. Jesus himself lived the profound unity of contemplative and active life.

Recitation of a Psalm

Psalm 145 (144): God Deserves Praise

I shall praise you to the heights, God my King, I shall bless your name for ever and ever.
Day after day I shall bless you,
I shall praise your name for ever and ever.
Great is Yahweh and worthy of all praise, his greatness beyond all reckoning.
Each age will praise your deeds to the next, proclaiming your mighty works.
Your renown is the splendor of your glory, I will ponder the story of your wonders.
They will speak of your awesome power, and I shall recount your greatness.
They will bring out the memory of your great generosity, and joyfully acclaim your saving justice.
Yahweh is tenderness and pity, slow to anger, full of faithful love. Yahweh is generous to all,
his tenderness embraces all his creatures. All your creatures shall thank you, Yahweh, and your faithful shall bless you.
They shall speak of the glory of your kingship and tell of your might, making known your mighty deeds to the children of Adam, the glory and majesty of your kingship.
Your kingship is a kingship forever, your reign lasts from age to age.
Yahweh is trustworthy in all his words, and upright in all his deeds.
Yahweh supports all who stumble, lifts up those who are bowed down.
All look to you in hope and you feed them with the food of the season. And, with generous hand, you satisfy the desires of every living creature. Upright in all that he does, Yahweh acts only in faithful love. He is close to all who call upon him, all who call on him from the heart.
He fulfils the desires of all who fear him, he hears their cry and he saves them.
Yahweh guards all who love him, but all the wicked he destroys.
My mouth shall always praise Yahweh, let every creature bless his holy name for ever and ever.

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.

17 JUL 2022

You're welcome

The guest room is a modern convenience. It's often a place for shoehorning out-of-town relatives amid the exercise equipment and stored off-season decorations. In the world of the Bible, hospitality meant more—extending welcome was a religious act, most frequently offered to strangers passing through town. Jesus urges his followers to practice radical hospitality to the poor, sick, prisoners, strangers, and socially marginalized: to all who are, like us, just passing through this life. How does your parish practice visible hospitality? How do you personally make the stranger and outsider feel welcome?

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Today's readings:

Genesis 18:1-10a; Colossians 1:24-28; Luke 10:38-42 (108).

"Let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves."

18 JUL 2022

Hang in there

Relentless is a good word to describe 16th-century soldier-turned-priest and patron of hospitals Saint Camillus de Lellis, who simply could not stop caring for the sick—even getting up from his own deathbed to see if other patients needed help. He suffered from a leg disease his whole life, but it was another illness—a gambling addiction—that led to his conversion, after he literally lost his shirt and had to take work in a Capuchin friary. In his experience of sickness and healing, he discovered his calling to heal others. The order he founded continues to minister to the sick today. May you find your own vocation in your afflictions and be inspired to pursue it with passion.

MEMORIAL OF CAMILLUS DE LELLIS, PRIEST, FOUNDER

Today's readings:

Micah 6:1-4, 6-8; Matthew 12:38-42 (395).

"Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you."

19 JUL 2022

Cultivate contemplation and simplicity

Carmel gets mentioned throughout the Old Testament, as a settlement and a mountain, both named for lush vegetation that grew there. The former was the homeland of King David's wife, Abigail. The latter was the holy mountain, dotted with caves, where Elijah confronted the false prophets of Baal. These caves also attracted early hermits who would go on to found the Carmelite religious order. Carmelite spirituality—in particular, contemplation and a simple lifestyle—was the touchstone of many influential Catholic saints, including John of the Cross, Teresa of Ávila, and Thérèse of Lisieux. How might your own spiritual life benefit from an increase in contemplation or simplicity?

Today's readings:

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Matthew 12:46-50 (396).

"Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance."

20 JUL 2022

Bounce back

Years back, Timex had a popular slogan claiming that their watches “could take a licking and keep on ticking.” No disrespect intended, but that truly could be an epitaph for the courageous Saint Apollinaris, who suffered endless beatings during the Roman persecutions of the early church yet refused to back down or abandon his ministry or his flock. Though his steadfastness eventually led to martyrdom, he lives on in the church’s collective memory and admiration. Next time life knocks you down, recall Apollinaris and get back into the ring!

MEMORIAL OF APOLLINARIS, BISHOP, MARTYR

Today's readings:

Jeremiah 1:1, 4-10; Matthew 13:1-9 (397).

“Some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.”

21 JUL 2022

Overachiever for God

We’re approaching the dog days of summer, but if you’re tempted to retreat from work, Saint Lawrence of Brindisi might inspire you otherwise. This overachieving saint was a brilliant linguist and preacher who held positions of leadership in his religious order, the Capuchin Franciscans. He founded multiple friaries, defended against heresies, and performed diplomatic missions. He died of apparent heat exhaustion following a diplomatic mission—working tirelessly until the end. Saint Lawrence poured his all into upholding the faith. Take a moment to consider how you, too, might uplift the faith.

MEMORIAL OF LAWRENCE OF BRINDISI, CAPUCHIN PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Today's readings:

Jeremiah 2:1-3, 7-8, 12-13; Matthew 13:10-17 (398).

“But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear.”

22 JUL 2022

It’s a paradox

Experiencing God is awesome and incomprehensible—what Catholic theologian Karl Rahner described as “Holy Mystery” and “Infinite Horizon.” And yet, this very same God draws close to us, becoming fully human to dwell with us. The experiences of Mary Magdalene with Jesus clearly demonstrate this. Having just saved the world, Jesus, in his first post-Resurrection appearance, comes not in a blaze of glory, but in the tender encounter with Mary and the very intimate calling of her name. Allow yourself to rest in this paradox, knowing that ours is not to figure out the mystery but to be embraced by it!

FEAST OF MARY MAGDALENE, DISCIPLE OF THE LORD

Today's readings:

Song of Songs 3:1-4b; John 20:1-2, 11-18 (603).

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni,’ which means Teacher.”

23 JUL 2022

A saint for all seasons

Bridget of Sweden, born in 1303, did it all: married at the age of 13, mother of eight children she raised with loving care; widow, ascetic, and member of the Franciscan Third Order; foundress of the Order of the Most Holy Savior; pilgrim to countless shrines, model of simplicity, prophet against church abuses; counselor to king and pope alike, devoted servant of the poor, renowned mystic and author—truly a remarkable woman, a saint for all seasons. Pope Saint John Paul II rightfully proclaimed her co-patron of Europe in 1999. She is an inspiration and reminder that whatever your role or station in life, sanctity can be found.

MEMORIAL OF BRIDGET, FOUNDRESS

Today's readings:

Jeremiah 7:1-11; Matthew 13:24-30 (400).

“How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord, mighty God! I had rather one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere.”