

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, August 21, 2022

2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

LECTIO

Opening Prayer:

We come before you, Father, and because we do not know how to talk to you, to help us we use the words your Son Jesus pronounced on our behalf. Help us to listen to the upsetting message of this word: «Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed». This is a word you repeat to everyone who listens to your Son's Gospel. Help us to understand it. So that we may be able to read your Scripture and savor it, feel it burn like a fire in us, we implore you, Father, send us your Spirit. And you Mary, Mother of contemplation who have kept the words and events of Jesus in your heart for a long time, grant us to contemplate the Word, to listen to it and allow it to penetrate our hearts.

Reading of the Gospel – Luke 13: 22-30

22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23 And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, 24 "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us.' He will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' 26 Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' 27 But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity!' 28 There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. 29 And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. 30 And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

A Few Moments of Prayerful Silence:

To listen devoutly to the voice of God, we need silence and interior calm. We need to create in our hearts «a quiet corner where we can make contact with God» (E. Stein) and be able to establish deep communication between ourselves and the Word. If we do not stand before God in silence, in silence and gazing on his face, we will form words but we will be saying nothing.

MEDITATIO

A Key to the Reading:

This Sunday's passage is found in the second part of Luke's Gospel where Jerusalem, the object of Jesus' existential and theological journey, is mentioned several times of which three are part of the post-Paschal liturgical way: Lk 9:51 (13th Sunday of Ordinary Time "C"), Lk 13:22-30 (21st Sunday of Ordinary Time "C") and Lk 17:11 (28th Sunday of Ordinary Time "C"). The proclamation of a journey, placed at the beginning of the Gospel text, helps the readers to remember that they are also journeying towards Jerusalem with Jesus. The journey towards the holy city is the thread that runs through the whole of the second part of the Gospel (Lk 9:51-19,46) and most of what is said is introduced by verbs of movement presenting Jesus and his disciples as pilgrims or itinerants. Jesus' journey towards the holy city is not strictly speaking a geographical journey, but corresponds to a theological and spiritual journey. This kind of journey involves also the disciple and the reader of the Gospel: going on «the journey» of Jesus makes us as if like itinerants whose mandate is to preach the Gospel.

On this journey Jesus faces conflicts with the Jewish world, and in Lk 13:10-30 includes three episodes: 13:10-17 (the healing of the crippled woman), 18-21 (the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast) and in 22-30 (the discourse on the narrow door). This last is the text the liturgy of the Word presents to us this Sunday. It begins with the journey as a background to Jesus' words as he went «through towns and villages...teaching» (v.22). It is characteristic of Luke to note Jesus' ministry as a journey.

Now, at one stage on this journey towards Jerusalem, someone puts a question to Jesus: how many will be saved? Jesus' reply does not mention any number of those who will be saved but contains an exhortation and a warning, «try», points to an attitude to be assumed: «to enter by the narrow door». This image recalls in the mind of the disciples and of Luke's community the need to address their preoccupation with the burdensome commitment that the journey of faith demands. Immediately after this, Jesus introduces the true and proper teaching with a parable that is associated with the image of the narrow door, the parable of the master of the house who, after having closed the door of the house, will not allow anyone in (v.25). This detail brings to mind the end of the parable of the ten virgins in Mt 25,10-12. These examples tell us that there is an intermediate time when we must commit ourselves to receive salvation before the door is closed definitively and irreversibly.

Partaking in even the founding moments in the life of the community, like at the supper of the Lord («we have eaten and drunk in your presence») and the proclamation of the Word («you have taught in our squares»), if not backed up by a life commitment, cannot avoid the danger of condemnation. Luke's Gospel likes to present Jesus as taking part at the table of those who invite him, but not all who sit at the table with him have an automatic right to the definitive salvation that he proclaimed through the image of a banquet. Thus, also, having heard his teaching does not automatically guarantee salvation. In fact, in Luke, listening to Jesus' word is an indispensable condition for discipleship, but it is not enough. Disciples need to make the commitment to follow the master, keeping his teaching and bearing fruit through perseverance (Lk 8:15).

Those who have not been able to enter by the narrow door before it is closed are called «doers of iniquity»: they are those who did not commit themselves to putting God's plan into practice. Their future situation is presented figuratively with an expression that tells of the irreversibility of their not being saved: «Then there will be weeping and grinding of teeth» (v.28).

Interesting is the reference to the great biblical patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and to all the prophets: they will enter and be part of the kingdom of God. If to Jesus' contemporaries this affirmation could seem to indicate that salvation was the privilege

of the Jews, for Christians of Luke's community it constituted a warning not to think of salvation as an automatic consequence. The kingdom that Jesus proclaims becomes the place where the disciples meet and come from the «east and west, from north and south» (v.29). Jesus' discourse introduces a dynamic of salvation that involves the whole of humanity and is addressed especially to the poor and sick (Lk 14:15-24). Luke, more than the other Evangelists, is sensitive to the proclamation of a universal salvation and presents Jesus as offering the promise of salvation no longer just to Israel, but to all peoples. The final affirmation comes as a sign of this changed condition of salvation: «there are those now last who will be first, and those now first who will be last» (v.30). This affirmation shows how God upsets and turns upside down the mechanisms of human logic: no one must trust in a position attained, but everyone is invited to constantly tune into the Gospel's wavelength.

Some Questions:

- The narrow door of salvation reminds us of the necessity of all to be committed to receiving this gift. The image does not say that God wishes to make it difficult to obtain salvation, but it emphasizes the co-responsibility of men and women, the concreteness of the effort involved in this commitment to obtain salvation. According to Cyprian, going through the narrow door means a transformation: «*Who does not wish to be transformed as soon as possible into the image of Christ?*». The image of the narrow door is a symbol of the work of transformation to which the believer is committed through a slow and progressive effort on him/herself in order to refine him/herself and be molded by the Gospel. More correctly, the one who does not commit him/herself to any kind of reciprocal relationship with God, with others and with the world, risks perdition. Often the temptation is to propose other doors, seemingly easier and more useful, like those of selfishness, avoiding God's friendship and relationships with others. Are you committed to build relationships or are you intent on being selfish? Are you convinced that salvation is offered you through the relational dimension of communion with God and others?
- Salvation is possible for all. Everyone may attain it, but such a gift from Jesus requires an effective and personal response from us. In Jesus' teaching we do not find the use of any threat to render people aware regarding salvation, but only an invitation to be fully aware of the extraordinary and irreversible opportunity of the gift of mercy and life before God and in dialogue with Him. Towards what and towards whom is your life pointing? How do you use your freedom? Are you able to welcome God's invitation to be co-responsible for your salvation or have you surrendered to waste and perdition?
- If we consider the question of that person who asked Jesus: "Sir, will there be only few saved?", no one can consider him/herself privileged. Salvation belongs to all and all are called. The door to salvation may be closed for those who expect to enter with the unwieldy luggage of personal inconsistencies. Do you feel the desire to enter and be part of that «infinite throng from east and west who will sit at the table of the kingdom of God»? And if you see yourself as last (small, simple, sinner, bent by suffering...) if you live with love and hope, do not despair. Jesus said that the last will be first.

ORATIO

Psalm 117: 1-2

Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!
For great is his steadfast love toward us;

and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!

Closing Prayer:

Lord, grant that we may feel the life of your Word we have heard; break, we beseech you, the knots of our uncertainty, our quibbles, our "ifs" and "buts" that hold us back from entering into salvation through the narrow door. Grant that we may welcome without fear, without too many doubts, the Word of God that invites us to commit ourselves and work hard at our life of faith. Lord, grant that through the Word we have heard this Sunday, the day of the Lord, we may be freed from false security concerning our salvation and may your Word bring us joy, strengthen, purify, and save us. And you, Mary, model of those who listen and of silence, help to be alive and authentic, to understand that, in virtue of the Word, whatever is difficult becomes easy, whatever is obscure becomes light.

CONTEMPLATIO

Contemplation is the peak of any biblical reading after we have meditated and prayed. To contemplate is to enter, through listening to the Word, into a faith and love relationship with God who is life and truth and who in Christ has revealed to us his face. The Word of God unveils that hidden face in every page of Sacred Scripture. Suffice it to look in admiration, be open to the light, allow it to penetrate us. It is the ecstasy experienced before the beautiful and the good. Extend into your daily life this climate of great communication experienced with God in listening to his Word, and preserve the taste of the beauty in your dialogue with others in whatever work you do.



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

21 AUG 2022 **Don't leave home without it**

If you've ever been locked out even once because you forgot your key, chances are you now check your pockets before you step outside the door. Being on the wrong side of a barred door is tough when it's due to hapless error. It's positively brutal when a door remains shut in your face because of something you did or failed to do. We've all received the key to a warm welcome at the threshold of God's realm: love. Church-going and check-writing may be basic but not *key*. The door opens to those whose hearts are open. Wherever you go today, check your pockets for love.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Today's readings:

Isaiah 66:18-21; Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13; Luke 13:22-30 (123).

"I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!"

22 AUG 2022 **A throne on high**

In many ancient cultures, including Israel's, it wasn't the wife of the king who was queen. Rather, the mother of the king was queen. And while her son was the unquestionable ruler, she often had tremendous influence over him. The same goes in heaven. Today's memorial is eight days—an octave—after celebrating Mary's Assumption. Pope Pius XII, who declared the dogma of the Assumption, said of his instituting the feast of Mary's Queenship, "so that all may recognize more clearly and venerate more devoutly the merciful and maternal sway of the Mother of God." Remember to hail your queen, Mary, today.

MEMORIAL OF THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY

Today's readings:

2 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 11-12; Matthew 23:13-22 (425).

"One who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who is seated on it."

23 AUG 2022 **It's your serve**

Saint Rose of Lima—like her saintly role model before her, Catherine of Siena—proved that you didn't need to become a nun to live a notable life of Christian piety and service. Both women were drawn to holiness at a young age, both resisted their parents' pressure to marry, both even took measures to make themselves less attractive to suitors. Each joined the lay Dominicans. Rose sought a sacrificial life as she brought home needy people to care for, saying, "When we serve the poor and the sick, we serve Jesus." How will you serve Jesus today?

MEMORIAL OF ROSE OF LIMA, THIRD ORDER DOMINICAN

Today's readings:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3a, 14-17; Matthew 23:23-26 (426).

"Cleanse first the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may be clean."

24 AUG 2022 **As I lay dying**

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross died on this date in 2004. Early in her medical training, she was horrified to see the term "hopeless patient" commonly applied to the terminally ill, who were often overly sedated and neglected. She went on to transform the way we look at terminal illness. A pioneer in hospice and palliative care, bioethics, and near-

death research, she led the movement to “treat the dying with dignity” and her 1969 classic *On Death and Dying* changed the way we look at grief. Perhaps appropriate that today is also the feast of Saint Bartholomew, the apostle famed for his painful death as a martyr. We can all play a part in bringing comfort and dignity to the dying process.

FEAST OF BARTHOLOMEW, APOSTLE

Today's readings:

Revelation 21:9b-14; John 1:45-51 (629).

“Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’ ”

25AUG₂₀₂₂ Be resilient in the face of resistance

Saint Joseph Calasanz is now widely recognized for his devotion to educating needy students. However, during his 17th-century lifetime Joseph encountered strong resistance. His family opposed his becoming a priest, and after he had founded innovative schools for the poor and the Piarist religious community to tend those schools, enemies attacked. In his 80s, the church removed Joseph from education leadership, and dissolved the Piarists. After his death, the Piarists were restored, and they continue their education ministry around the world today. If you struggle with a seeming failure, look to the life of Saint Joseph of Calasanz for a model of faithfulness and endurance.

MEMORIAL OF JOSEPH CALASANZ, PRIEST, FOUNDER

Today's readings:

1 Corinthians 1:1-9; Matthew 24:42-51 (428).

“Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.’ ”

26AUG₂₀₂₂ Dialogue to break new ground

There’s a lot of talk right now. Talk about gun control, women’s rights, dismantling racism—or not. The conversations are urgent yet often feel futile. What we need, writes Father Raimon Panikkar, whose anniversary of death is today, is not talk, but dialogue. Dialogue “is not a simple conversation, not a mere mutual enrichment by the supplementary information that is contributed; it is not exclusively a corrective of misunderstandings . . . It is the joint search for the shared and the different.” How can you foster this kind of dialogue that nourishes what each person contributes?

Today's readings:

1 Corinthians 1:17-25; Matthew 25:1-13 (429).

“Where is the wise one? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made the wisdom of the world foolish?”

27AUG₂₀₂₂ Don’t stop believing

At some point or another, each of us loses our way in life. Some only briefly, others for a long time. Sadly, some never find their way home. But if we are blessed with someone as special as Saint Monica, we might be fortunate enough to share the fate of her famous son, Saint Augustine. He wrote in his *Confessions* that she had “brought me to birth, both in her flesh, so that I was born into this temporal light, and in her heart, that I might be born into eternal light.” Give thanks for the people in your life who never stopped believing in you.

MEMORIAL OF MONICA, MOTHER OF AUGUSTINE

Today's readings:

1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Matthew 25:14-30 (430).

“His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant.’ ”