

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 28, 2022

22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Listening to the Text

Initial Prayer:

Lord, we all have an insatiable need to listen to you, and you know it, because your yourself has created us like that. "You alone have words of eternal life" (Jn 6: 68). We believe in these words, we are hungry and thirsty for these words; for these words, in

humility and love, we commit all our fidelity. "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Sam 3: 9). It is the frantic prayer of Samuel who does not know; ours is somewhat different, but it has been precisely your voice, your Word, which has changed the shaking of the ancient prayer in the yearning for communion of a son who cries to his Father: Speak for your son is listening.

Reading of the Gospel – Luke 14: 1, 7-14:

1 Now it happened that on a Sabbath day he had gone to share a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely.

7 He then told the guests a parable, because he had noticed how they picked the places of honor. He said this, 8 'When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take your seat in the place of honor. A more distinguished person than you may have been invited, 9 and the person who invited you both may come and say, "Give up your place to this man." And then, to your embarrassment, you will have to go and take the lowest place. 10 No; when you are a guest, make your way to the lowest place and sit there, so that, when your host comes, he may say, "My friend, move up higher." Then, everyone with you at the table will see you honored. 11 For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be raised up.' 12 Then he said to his host, 'When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relations or rich neighbors, in case they invite you back and so repay you. 13 No; when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; 14 then you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you and so you will be repaid when the upright rise again.'

Moment of Prayerful Silence:

In order to be affected by the word of Christ and so that the Word made flesh, who is Christ, can dwell in our heart and that we can adhere, it is necessary that there be listening and profound silence.

The Word is Enlightened (Lectio)

Context:

The parable on the choice of place is narrated on a Saturday when Jesus is already in Jerusalem, where the Paschal Mystery will be fulfilled, where the Eucharist of the new Covenant will be celebrated, to which then follows, the encounter with the living one and the entrusting of mission of the disciples which prolongs thus the historical mission of Jesus. The light of the Passover makes all those who are called to represent him as servant, *diakonos*, within the community, gathered around the table, to see the road that the Lord follows. It is the theme of the guests at table or of joyful living together of Saint Luke. Jesus has realized the most beautiful reality, proclaimed and taught at table in a joyful, sociable frame.

In chapter 14, Luke, with his art of a capable narrator, paints a picture, in which he superimposed two images: Jesus at table defines the face of the new community, convoked around the Eucharistic table. The page is subdivided in two scenes: first, the invitation to dinner in the house of one of the chief Pharisees, on a feast day, Saturday (Lk 14: 15-16), which also concerns the problem of the guests: who will participate at the table of the Kingdom? This is prepared beginning now in the relationship with Jesus, who convokes around himself the persons in the community-Church.

Exegesis:

- **Saturday a day of feast and of liberation**

This is the passage in Luke: *"On a Sabbath day he had gone to share a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely."* (Lk 14: 1). On a

feast day Jesus is invited by the one who is responsible for the movement of the observant or Pharisees. Jesus is at table. The first episode takes place in this context: the healing of a man with dropsy prevented by his physical disability to participate at table. Those who are sick in their body are excluded from the community by the observants as the Rule of Qumran says. The meal on Saturday has a festive and sacred character especially for the observant of the Law. In fact, on Saturday, there is a weekly remembrance of Exodus and of the creation. Jesus, precisely on that Saturday gives back freedom and reintegrates in full health the man with dropsy.

He, therefore, justifies his gesture before the teachers and the observant of the Law with these words: "*Which of you here if his ass or ox falls into a well, will not pull it out on a Sabbath day?*" God is interested in persons and not only in the property or possessions of man. Saturday is not reduced to external observance of the sacred rest, but is in favor of man. With this concern turned toward man, is also given the key to define the criteria of convocation in this community symbolized by the table: How to choose the place? Whom to invite and who participates at the end in the Banquet of the Kingdom? The gesture of Jesus is a program: Saturday is made for man. On Saturday he does that which is the fundamental significance of the celebration of the memory of the getting out of Egypt and of creation.

- **On the choice of places and of the guests**

The criteria to choose the places are not based on precedence, on the roles or the fame or renown, but are inspired on the acts of God who promotes the last ones, "*because the one who raises himself up will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be raised up*" (Lk 14: 11). This principle which closes the parable of the new etiquette, that of the turning over of the worldly criteria, refers to God's action by means of the passive form "*will be raised up*". God raises up the little ones and the poor as Jesus has done introducing the man with dropsy, who was excluded, to the table to eat together in the Sabbatical feast.

Then we have the criteria for the choice of guests. The criteria of recommendation and of corporative solidarity are excluded: "*Do not invite your friends, or your brothers or your relations or rich neighbors...*" "*On the contrary, when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind...*" (Lk 14: 12, 13).

The list begins with the poor, who in Luke's Gospel are the beneficiaries of the Beatitudes: "*Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven*". In the list of the guests the poor are mentioned as the physically disabled, the handicapped, excluded from the confraternity of the Pharisees and from the ritual of the time (cf. 2 Sam 5: 8; Lv 21: 18).

This same list is found in the parable of the great banquet: the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame, take the place of the respectful guests. (Lk 14: 21).

This second parable on the criteria of choice of the guests is proclaimed with this proclamation: "*Then you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you and so you will be repaid when the upright rise again*" (Lk 14: 14), at the end of time when God will manifest his sovereignty communicating eternal life. At this point there is a phrase of one of the invited guests which is like a souvenir between the two small parables and the parable of the great banquet: "*Blessed is anyone who will share the meal in the Kingdom of God*" (Lk 14: 15). This word which recalls the Beatitude of the Kingdom and the condition to participate in it through the image of the banquet, "*to eat the bread*", introduces the parable of the great banquet in its eschatological meaning. But this final banquet, which is the Kingdom of God and the full communion with Him, is prepared at present by sitting and eating together at the same table. Jesus narrates this parable to interpret the convocation of men with the announcement of the Kingdom of God and through his historical action.

The Word Enlightens Me (To Meditate)

- When Jesus was in the house of the Pharisee who had invited him to eat observes how those invited try to get the first places. It is a very common attitude in life, not only when one is at table: each one tries also to get the first place regarding attention and consideration on the part of others. Everyone, beginning by ourselves, we have this experience. But let us pay attention, the words of Jesus which exhort to abstain from seeking the first place are not simply an exhortation of good education; they are a rule of life. Jesus clarifies that it is the Lord to give to each one the dignity and the honor, we are not the ones to give it to ourselves, perhaps claiming our own merits. Like he did in the Beatitudes, Jesus turns over the judgement and the behavior of this world. The one who recognizes himself a sinner and humble is raised up by God, but, who instead intends to get recognition and the first places risks to exclude himself from the banquet.
- “Do not take your seat in the place of honor, a more distinguished person than you may have been invited... then to your embarrassment you will have to go and take the lowest place. (Lk 14: 8-9). It seems that Jesus takes as a joke the childish efforts of the guests who struggle in order to get the best positions; but his intention has a more serious purpose. Speaking to the leaders of Israel he shows which is the power which builds up the relations of the Kingdom: “Whoever raises himself up will be humbled and who humbles himself will be raised up” (Lk 14: 11). He describes to them the “good use of power” founded on humility. It is the same power which God releases in humanity in the Incarnation: “At the service of the will of the Father, in order that the whole creation returns to him, the Word did not count “equality with God something to be grasped, but he emptied himself taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death on the cross” (Phil 2: 6-8). This glorious kenosis of the Son of God has the capacity to heal, to reconcile and to liberate all creation. Humility is the force which builds up the Kingdom and the community of the disciples, the Church.

To Pray – Psalm 23

The Psalm seems to turn around a title: the Lord is my shepherd”. The Saints are the image of the flock on the way: they are accompanied by the goodness and the loyalty of God, until they definitively reach the house of the Father (L. Alonso Schökel, The Psalms of trust, Dehoniana Books, Bologna 2006, 54).

Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

In grassy meadows he lets me lie. By tranquil streams he leads me to restore my spirit.

He guides me in paths of saving justice as befits his name.

Even were I to walk

in a ravine as dark as death I should fear no danger, for you are at my side.

Your staff and your crook are there to soothe me.

You prepare a table for me under the eyes of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil; my cup brims over.

Kindness and faithful love pursue me every day of my life.

I make my home in the house of Yahweh for all time to come.

Final Prayer

“Lord, thanks to your light which descended on me, it flooded my life with the conviction that I am a sinner. I have understood more deeply that your Son Jesus is my Savior.

My will, my spirit, all my being hold Him tightly. May the omnipotence of your love, conquer me, Oh my God. Overthrow the resistance which frequently renders me rebellious, the nostalgia which impels me to be indolent, lazy; may your Love conquer everything so that I can be a happy trophy of your victory.

My hope is anchored in your fidelity. Whether I have to grow in the whirlwinds of civilization, I have converted into a flower and your watchman in this Spring which has blossomed, sprout out from the Blood of your Son. You look at each one of us, you take care of us, you watch over us; you, the Cultivator of this Spring of Eternal Life: you, Father of Jesus, and our Father; you, my Father!" (*Anastasio Ballestrero*)



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

28 AUG 2022 **Make us meek, again**

We're trained in the art of competition early. First, we barter for our parents' attention with siblings or tasks that distract them from celebrating us. In school, we compete for grades; in sports, for victories. By the time we arrive in the workplace, in marriages, or in adulthood in general, we're primed to fight for what seems rightfully ours: the spotlight. Saint Thomas Aquinas recommends the way of humility as the virtue that "most effectively removes the main obstacle to our spiritual welfare, the preoccupation with earthly greatness." Cede the floor. Surrender the talking stick. Cherish humility.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Today's readings:

Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29; Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24a; Luke 14:1, 7-14 ([126](#)).

"Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place."

29 AUG 2022 **Tough love is needed**

We have to find ways to publicly discourse—respectfully—if we are to have any hope of remaining a society. It's increasingly common to retreat to our corners out of frustration and disgust. That's the easy way out. John the Baptist, for one, proposed a harder path of standing up for beliefs but also of generously giving oneself "in love, in truth" as Pope Francis said of John on the memorial of his passion. Is it possible to have hard conversations with disagreeable neighbors, co-workers, and family—and still "love your enemy"? Could you have those conversations by treating them as you would like to be treated?

MEMORIAL OF THE PASSION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Today's readings:

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 ([431](#)); Mark 6:17-29 ([634](#)).

"Herod feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man, and kept him in custody."

30 AUG 2022 **Hot off the presses**

On this day in 1464, Pope Paul II became our 211th pontiff. While Paul II raised eyebrows over a certain Renaissance ostentatiousness that had him amassing jewels and fine clothing, along with an extravagant remodel of Palazzo Venezia, Paul II also organized relief work among the poor and promoted the preservation of antiquities. Most notably, just a few years after Gutenberg printed his famous Bible, he brought the first printing presses to Rome, which made books more affordable and accessible to all. Open a Bible today in print or online and give thanks for the inventions that have contributed to worldwide evangelization.

Today's readings:

1 Corinthians 2:10b-16; Luke 4:31-37 ([432](#)).

"We speak about them not with words taught by human wisdom, but with words taught by the Spirit."

31 AUG 2022 **The healing power**

The laying on of hands is a practice with a long tradition in our faith. Jesus laid on hands to heal and, after in his post-Ascension appearances, to bestow the Holy Spirit on his followers. Christians ever since have done the same in Christ's name. God works through us, literally, in the laying on of hands. From a hug to a blessing to an

anointing, touch has the power to heal. It is what Pope Francis means by the Christian "culture of encounter." It is an invitation to be moved with compassion toward others "and then to draw near, to touch and to say: 'Do not weep' and to give at least a drop of life." Reach out today.

Today's readings:

1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Luke 4:38-44 (433).

"At sunset, all who had people sick with various diseases brought them to him. He laid his hands on each of them and cured them."

01SEP₂₀₂₂ Be creative in protecting creation

Today is World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. These worldwide, ecumenical efforts are meant to bring together Christians in prayer, action, and advocacy for protection of the environment. One of the "great moral issues of our time [is] the preservation of God's creation," Pope Francis has stated. While the climate crisis and related issues are daunting in scale, most people can take small actions that add up: from praying for our planet, to voting for candidates who prioritize environmental issues, to running errands by bicycle. What can you do today?

Today's readings:

1 Corinthians 3:18-23; Luke 5:1-11 (434).

"When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him."

02SEP₂₀₂₂ Let the feast begin

We all know that fasting is a common spiritual practice. But did you know that feasting is also a spiritual practice? Consider our Catholic experience. We speak of "feast days" to celebrate saints and significant church events. We call Easter the "Feast of Feasts," ending our fasts and celebrating with special meals. We proclaim the wedding feast at Cana and the many stories of Jesus feasting with friends. Feasting can be fully enjoying any experience such as being with friends or watching the sunset. How might you incorporate it as one of your spiritual practices?

Today's readings:

1 Corinthians 4:1-5; Luke 5:33-39 (435).

"Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?"

03SEP₂₀₂₂ Build upon existing foundations

New cities rise on the ruins of former times. New traditions build on existing ones. This is how history proceeds. Gregory the Great, the leader the early church needed in 590, understood this better than most. Instead of having temples to earlier gods destroyed, he instructed missionaries to bless them with holy water and repurpose them. The same with festivals associated with other gods. He suggested that their meaning be tied to "good fellowship," with food offered not as sacrifices to pagan gods but "for the glory of God." In this way pre-Christian Europe was converted to Christianity. Build upon the past as you help shape the future church and society.

MEMORIAL OF GREGORY THE GREAT, POPE, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Today's readings:

1 Corinthians 4:6b-15; Luke 6:1-5 (436).

"The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."