

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, September 25, 2022

Twenty-sixth Sunday of 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 16: 19-31

A Key to the Reading:

In this 26th Sunday of Ordinary Time, the Liturgy places before us the parable of the poor Lazarus, sitting before the door of the rich man. This parable is a faithful mirror, in which is mirrored not only the situation of the society at the time of Jesus, but also our society of the XXI century. The parable is a strong and radical denunciation of this situation because it clearly indicates that God thinks contrary to that. In the parable there are three persons: the poor man, the rich man and Father Abraham. The poor man has a name but does not speak. He hardly exists. His only friends are the little dogs which lick his wounds. The rich man does not have a name but speaks always and insists. He wants to be right, but he does not succeed. Father Abraham is the father of both of them, and loves both, and he calls the rich man who is in hell, but he does not succeed in obtaining that the rich man changes opinion and converts himself. During the reading try to be very attentive to the conversation of the rich man with Father Abraham, to the arguments of the rich man and to the arguments of Father Abraham.

A Division of the Text to Help in the Reading:

- Luke 16: 19-21: The situation of both in this life
- Luke 16: 22: The situation of both in the other life
- Luke 16: 23-26: The first conversation between the rich man and Abraham
- Luke 16: 27-29: The second conversation between the rich man and Abraham
- Luke 16: 30-31: The third conversation between the rich man and Abraham

Text:

19 'There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen and feast magnificently every day. 20 And at his gate there used to lie a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who longed to fill himself with what fell from the rich man's table. Even dogs came and licked his sores. 22 Now it happened that the poor man died and was carried away by the angels into Abraham's embrace. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 'In his torment in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off with Lazarus in his embrace. 24 So he cried out, "Father Abraham, pity me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames." 25 Abraham said, "My son, remember that during your life you had your fill of good things, just as Lazarus his fill of bad. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony. 26 But that is not all: between us and you a great gulf has been fixed, to prevent those who want to cross from our side to yours or from your side to ours." 27 'So he said, "Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, 28 since I have five brothers, to give them warning so that they do not come to this place of torment too." 29 Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them listen to them." 30 The rich man replied, "Ah no, father Abraham, but if someone comes to them from the dead, they will repent."

31 Then Abraham said to him, "If they will not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead."

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 point of the text pleased you most and what struck you most? Why?
- Compare the situation of the poor man and of the rich man before and after death. Which is their situation before death? What changes in the situation of the poor man and of the rich man after death?
- What separates the poor man from the rich man before death? What separates the rich man from the poor man after death?
- In the conversation between the rich man and Father Abraham, what does the rich man ask and what is the response of Abraham?
- In this parable, the situation changes only after death. Would it be that Jesus wants to tell us that during life the poor have to bear everything in order to be able then, to merit Heaven? What do you think?
- There are some persons who, like the rich man of the parable, expect miracles in order to be able to believe in God. But God asks to believe in Moses and in the Prophets. And I, toward which side does my heart tend: toward the miracle or toward the Word of God?
- How do I treat the poor? For me, do they have a name?

To Deepen the Theme

Context:

In the Gospel of Luke, from Chapter 9 (Lk 9: 51), we are accompanying Jesus on his journey toward Jerusalem. Here in chapters 15 and 16, as to say, we reach the summit, the center of the journey, from where it is possible to see the road that has already been covered and that which still has to be covered. Or, that is, that on the summit of the hill, or in the center of the Gospel, we perceive with greater clarity the two principal themes which go through the Gospel of Luke, from one end to the other. In chapter 15, the parable of the father with his two sons reveals to us the tenderness and the mercy of God who accepts all. Now chapter 16 presents to us the parable of the poor Lazarus to reveal the attitude that we should have before the problem of poverty and of social injustice.

Every time that Jesus has something important to communicate, he narrates or tells a parable, he creates a story which mirrors the reality of the people. Thus, during the reflection on visible reality, he leads those who listen to discover the invisible appeals of God, present in life. A parable is made to make people think and reflect. This is why it is important to be attentive even to small details. In the parable on which we are meditating, there are three persons. Lazarus, the poor man, the only one who does not speak. The rich man without a name, who speaks to ask. Father Abraham, who, in the parable, represents the thought of God- The rich man without a name represents the

dominating ideology of the government of the time. Lazarus represents the excruciating cry of the poor at the time of Jesus, of the time of Luke and of all times.

Commentary on the Text:

- Luke 16: 19-21 - The situation of the rich man and of the poor man.

Here we have the two extremes of society. On the one hand, the aggressive richness. On the other the poor without any resources, without any rights, covered with ulcers and wounds, impure, with nobody to accept him to receive him, except the little dogs which lick his wounds. What separates both of them is only a door: the closed door of the house of the rich man. On his part there is no acceptance, no pity for the problem of the poor man who is before his door. But in the parable, the poor man has a name, while the rich man does not. The name of the poor man is Lazarus, which means God helps.

Through the poor God helps the rich and the rich man could have his name written in the Book of Life. But the rich man does not accept to be helped by the poor man, because he continues to keep the door closed. This beginning of the parable which describes the situation, is a faithful mirror of what happens in the time of Jesus and of Luke. and it is also the mirror of what happens today!

- Luke 16: 22 - The change revealed by the truth which was hidden

"Now it happened that the poor man died and was carried away by the angels into Abraham's embrace. The rich man also died and was buried." In the parable, the poor man dies before the rich man. This is a warning for the rich. Up to the time when the poor man was before the door, alive, it is still possible for the rich man to be saved. But after the poor man dies, the only instrument of salvation for the rich man, also dies. Today, millions of poor people die, victims of the geopolitics of the rich countries.

The poor man dies and is carried away by the angels into Abraham's embrace. The embrace of Abraham is the source of life, from where is born the People of God. Lazarus, the poor man, belongs to the People of God, forms part of the People of Abraham, from which he is excluded because he was at the door of the rich man. The rich man who thinks that he is a son of Abraham, he also dies and is buried. But he does not go toward the embrace of Abraham, because he is not a son of Abraham! The introduction of the parable ends here. Now begins the revelation of its meaning, through three conversations between the rich man and Father Abraham.

- Luke 16: 23-26 - The first conversation between the rich man without a name and Father Abraham

The parable is like a window which Jesus opens for us on the other side of life, the side of God. It is not a question of Heaven. It is a question of the true side of life discovered only by faith and that the rich man, without faith does not perceive. The dominating ideology prevents him from discovering it. And it is only in the light of death that the ideology disintegrates itself in the mind of the rich man, and that the true value of life appears to him. On God's part, without the ideology and the deceiving propaganda of the government, their lucks will be changed: The rich man suffers, the poor man is happy. The rich man, in seeing Lazarus in Abraham's embrace asks that Lazarus gives some relief to his suffering. In the light of death, the rich man discovers that Lazarus is his only possible benefactor. But now it is too late! The rich man without a name is a Jew (or Christian) "pious," knows Abraham and calls him Father. Abraham responds and calls him son. That means that, in reality, this word of Abraham is addressed to the rich who are alive. In so far as being alive, they also have the possibility of becoming sons of Abraham, if they open the door to

Lazarus, to the poor man, to the only one who in God's name can help them. For the rich man, closed up in his suffering, salvation consisted in a drop of water which Lazarus could give him. In reality, for the rich man, salvation does not consist in that Lazarus gives him a drop of water to refresh his tongue, but rather, that he himself, the rich man, opens the closed door of his house and enters into contact with the poor man. It is only in this way that it will be possible to overcome the great abyss which separates him.

In Abraham's response, the truth of the four curses appears before the rich man: (Lk 6: 24-26). But alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now. Alas for you who have plenty to eat now: you shall go hungry. Alas for you who are laughing now: you shall mourn and weep. 'Alas for you when everyone speaks well of you! This was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets.

- Luke 16: 27-29: The second conversation between the rich man and Abraham
The rich man insists: "Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, since I have five brothers!" The rich man does not want his brothers to suffer the same torment. "Send Lazarus!" Lazarus, the poor man, is the only true intermediary between God and the rich. But the rich man, during his life was not concerned for the poor Lazarus. He is concerned about himself and of his brothers. He was never concerned about the poor! It is like the older son of the "Parable of the Father with two sons" (Lk 15: 25-30). The older one wanted to have a feast with his friends, and not with his brother who had been lost. Abraham's response is clear: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them!" They have the Bible! The rich man had the Bible. He knew it even by heart. But he never became aware that the Bible had something to do with the poor who were at his door. The key to understand the sense of the Bible and of salvation is the poor Lazarus, sitting at the door of the rich man!

Extending the information:

Because of the unjust social context at the time of Jesus:

In the year 64 B.C. the Romans invaded Palestine and imposed upon the people a very heavy tax. The scholars estimate that more or less half of the family income was destined to pay the taxes, the taxes of the Roman Government. Besides, Rome made a geopolitical reorganization in the region. Before the Roman invasion, the whole region, from Tyre to Sidon up to the frontier with Egypt, was governed by the Asmonei, the prolongation of the Maccabees. After the invasion, only three regions remained under the government of the Jews: Judea, Pereira and Galilee. In order to be able to maintain the control on dominated peoples with a minimum of sacrifice and at their own expense, the Romans were the Saducees, the elders, some publicans and part of the priests. Thus, all this change brought about by the Roman invasion caused almost all the Jews who were living in the other territories of that region to migrate toward Judea and Galilee. The consequence of this: the population was doubled in Judea and in Galilee and the family income diminished by half. The result: on the one hand, progressive impoverishment, unemployment, begging, extreme poverty. On the other, exaggerated enrichment of the local population, supported by the Romans. The faithful picture of this situation is expressed in the parable of the poor Lazarus and of the rich man who had no pity.

Final Reflection around the parable

The rich man who has everything and who closes himself up in himself, loses God, loses the richness, loses life, loses himself, loses his name, loses everything. The poor man who has nothing, has God, gains life, has a name, gains everything. The poor man is Lazarus, he is "God helps." God comes to us in the person of the poor man sitting at our door, to help

us overcome the insurmountable abyss created by the rich who have no heart. Lazarus is also Jesus, the poor Messiah and servant, who was not accepted, but whose death radically changed all things. And in the light of the death of the poor man, everything changes.

The place of torment is the situation of the persons without God. Even if the rich man thinks that he has a religion and faith, he does not know how to be with God because he does not open the door to the poor man, as Zacchaeus did (Lk 19: 1-10).

Prayer of a Psalm

Psalm 15 (14): Yahweh, who can find a home in your tent?

Yahweh, who can find a home in your tent, who can dwell on your holy mountain?
Whoever lives blamelessly, who acts uprightly,
who speaks the truth from the heart, who keeps the tongue under control, who does not wrong a comrade,
who casts no discredit on a neighbor, who looks with scorn on the vile,
but honours those who fear Yahweh, who stands by an oath at any cost,
who asks no interest on loans,
who takes no bribe to harm the innocent. No one who so acts can ever be shaken.

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.

25SEP₂₀₂₂ Blessed are the wanderers

Biblical prophets warn the comfortable not to overlook the suffering of those less fortunate. Today on World Day of Migrants and Refugees, we support the church's solidarity with uprooted people since the Second World War. A mass exodus to the West of Soviet bloc refugees prompted Pope Pius XII, future Pope Paul VI, and layman James Norris to form the International Catholic Migration Commission. The ICMC continued its response to the "boat people" of Vietnam, Bosnian Muslims, Afghani refugees, and more. Their efforts restore dignity, inspire change, and companion the displaced. Welcome the stranger.

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Today's readings:

Amos 6:1a, 4-7; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; Luke 16:19-31 ([138](#)).

"Thus says the LORD the God of hosts: Woe to the complacent in Zion!"

26SEP₂₀₂₂ Give them a healer's welcome

Believed to have been twin brothers, Cosmas and Damian were third-century Christian Syrian physicians who accepted no payment for caring for the sick—and made many converts as a result of their selfless service. They were eventually martyred by the Romans. Many of us know "saints" in the healthcare profession who work physically and emotionally demanding jobs, make personal sacrifices (including endangering their own health during the pandemic), and have a seemingly endless supply of compassion despite it all. The next time you or someone you love needs medical help, ask Cosmas and Damian to support the professionals coming to your aid.

MEMORIAL OF COSMAS AND DAMIAN, MARTYRS

Today's readings:

Job 1:6-22; Luke 9:46-50 ([455](#)).

"Whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

27SEP₂₀₂₂ Enrich the faith of others

Before co-founding the Daughters of Charity—serving the "poorest of the poor"—Saint Vincent de Paul began the Congregation of the Mission in 1625. Priests who joined had three requirements: to live in imitation of Christ, to take the gospel to the rural poor, and to educate fellow priests in the practical matters of being a priest. When he realized peasants knew so little about the faith and that local priests were poorly trained in administering the sacrament of Penance, Vincent preached such a stirring parish mission that priests from a nearby town had to be called in to help him hear confessions. How can you help others practice their faith?

MEMORIAL OF VINCENT DE PAUL, PRIEST, FOUNDER

Today's readings:

Job 3:1-3, 11-17, 20-23; Luke 9:51-56 ([456](#)).

"He resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem."

28SEP₂₀₂₂ Carry on the work of the dead among the living

At the time of Jesus, the Jewish custom was to bury a person in the family burial cave the same day they died. The body was left for a year while the family mourned, the first seven days in *shivah*, followed by a less intense 30-day

period of *shloshim*. The burial rite was not complete, however, as the family would return to the cave a year later for the "second burial," the collection of remains to be placed with the bones of other ancestors in the family ossuary. It is theorized that when Jesus commented, "Let the dead bury their dead," he may have been referring to this second burial, suggesting to his disciples that there was more urgent work to be done among the living. Pray for the dead but serve the living!

Today's readings:

Job 9:1-12, 14-16; Luke 9:57-62 (457).

"Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the Kingdom of God."

29 SEP 2022 Angels watching over us

Today we honor the only three angels in scripture who have names. Michael is cited in the books of Daniel and Revelation and is known for being a protector. Gabriel is most famously a messenger, having relayed information to Daniel, but best known for giving Mary the news that she would be mother to our Savior. Raphael is associated with healing and appears in a series of adventures in the Book of Tobit, including his cure of Tobit's blindness. At various times, each of us needs protection, a message from God, or healing. May these three archangels lift our prayers when we and our communities most need these things.

FEAST OF MICHAEL, GABRIEL, AND RAPHAEL, ARCHANGELS

Today's readings:

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 or Revelation 12:7-12a; John 1:47-51 (647).

"Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

30 SEP 2022 Get to know the word

If you are a fan of scripture, then right next to your Bible should be *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*. The 2,000-plus-page book is a treasure trove of insight about the Bible written by Roman Catholic scholars from across the globe. It is a great resource for helping people to engage more deeply with scripture through study and reflection. The book is named after Saint Jerome, who is best known for his biblical commentaries and translations. Jerome believed that "Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ." It's never too late to increase your knowledge. What would be the first scripture passage you'd look up if you had the book in hand? Why?

MEMORIAL OF JEROME, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Today's readings:

Job 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5; Luke 10:13-16 (459).

"Whoever listens to you listens to me."

01 OCT 2022 In loving color

Though she only lived 24 brief years, Thérèse of Lisieux, the "little flower," was so spiritually mature she was asked to guide novices who were entering her Carmelite order. She used vivid metaphors, comparing the Trinity to a kaleidoscope because the three mirrors transform simple images into colorful designs. She wrote: "As long as our actions, even the smallest, do not fall away from the focus of Divine Love, the Holy Trinity, symbolized by the three mirrors, allows them to reflect wonderful beauty. Jesus . . . always sees beauty in everything we do."

MEMORIAL OF THÉRÈSE OF THE CHILD JESUS, CARMELITE NUN, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Today's readings:

Job 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17; Luke 10:17-24 (460).

"Turning to the disciples in private he said, 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see.'"