

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 18, 2022

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Lord, my Father, today I bring before you my weakness, my shame, my distance from you; I no longer hide my dishonesty and infidelity, because you know and see everything, in depth, with the eyes of your love and of your compassion. I ask you, good Doctor, pour on my wound the balm of your Word, of your voice which speaks to me, calls me and teaches me. Do not take away your gift, Who is the Holy Spirit: allow him to breathe on me, as a breath of life, from the four winds; that He envelops me as a tongue of fire and inundates me as water of salvation; send Him to me from your holy Heaven, as the dove of truth, to announce, today also, that you are and that you wait for me, that you take me with you, after all, as on the first day, when you shaped me and created and called me.

Reading

To Insert the Passage in its Context:

This evangelical pericope belongs to the great section of the narration of Luke which includes the long journey of Jesus towards Jerusalem; it opens in Lk 9: 51 to end in Lk 19: 27. This section, in turn, is subdivided into three parts, as three stages in the journey of Jesus, each one of which is introduced by an annotation almost like a repetition: "Jesus resolutely turned his face towards Jerusalem" (9: 51); "Through towns and villages he went teaching, making his way to Jerusalem" (13: 22); "...on the way to Jerusalem he was travelling in the borderlands of Samaria and Galilee" (17: 11); to reach the conclusion in 19: 28: "When he had said this he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem," when Jesus enters the City.

We find ourselves in the second part, from Lk 13: 22 to 17, 10 which includes diverse teachings, which Jesus offers to his interlocutors: the crowds, the Pharisees, the Scribes, the disciples. In this unity, Jesus enters into dialogue with his disciples and offers them a parable, to indicate which is the correct use of the goods of this world and how our own life should be concretely administered, inserted in a filial relation with God. Then follow three "sayings" or secondary applications of the same parable in diverse situations, which help the disciples to make space for the new life in the Spirit, which the Father offers them.

To Help in the Reading of the Passage:

- **vv. 1-8:** Jesus tells the parable of the wise and shrewd steward: a man, accused of his excessive greed, which has become unbearable, who finds himself in a decisive and difficult moment in his life, but who succeeds to use all his human resources to turn to good his clamorous failure. Just like this son of the world has known how to discern his own interests, so also the children of light have to learn to discern the will of love and the gift of their Father, to live like Him.
- **v. 9:** Jesus makes us understand that also dishonest and unjust richness, which is that of this world, if used for the good, as a gift, leads to salvation.
- **vv. 10-12:** Jesus explains that the goods of this world are not to be demonized, but rather are to be understood for the value which they have. They are said to be "minimum," they are "the little" of our life, but we are called to administer them faithfully and attentively, because they are a means to enter into communion with the brothers and sisters and therefore, with the Father.
- **v. 13:** Jesus offers a fundamental teaching: there is only one and unique end in our life and this is God, the Lord. To seek to serve any other reality means to become slaves, to bind ourselves to deceit and to die even now.

The Gospel Text - Luke 16: 1-13:

1 He also said to his disciples, 'There was a rich man and he had a steward who was denounced to him for being wasteful with his property. 2 He called for the man and said, "What is this I hear about you? Draw me up an account of your stewardship because you are not to be my steward any longer." 3 Then the steward said to himself, "Now that my master is taking the stewardship from me, what am I to do? Dig? I am not strong enough. Go begging? I should be too ashamed. 4 Ah, I know what I will do to make sure that when I am dismissed from office there will be some to welcome me into their homes." 5 'Then he called his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, "How much do you owe my master?" 6 "One hundred measures of oil," he said. The steward said, "Here, take your bond; sit down and quickly write fifty." 7 To another he said, "And you, sir, how much do you owe?" "One hundred measures of wheat," he said. The steward said, "Here, take your

bond and write eighty." 8 'The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness. For the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light.'

9 'And so I tell you this: use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends, and thus make sure that when it fails you, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings.'

10 Anyone who is trustworthy in little things is trustworthy in great; anyone who is dishonest in little things is dishonest in great. 11 If then you are not trustworthy with money, that tainted thing, who will trust you with genuine riches? 12 And if you are not trustworthy with what is not yours, who will give you what is your very own?

13 'No servant can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.'

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

I accept the silence of this moment, of this sacred time of encounter with Him. I who am poor, without money, without possessions, without house and without my own strength, because nothing comes from me, but everything comes from Him, it is His, I allow myself to be taken in by His richness of compassion and of mercy.

Some Questions

- Like any Christian I am also an "administrator" of the Lord, the rich Man of our existence, the Only One Who possesses goods and riches. What is it that regulates my thoughts daily and, consequently, my daily choices, my actions, my relations?
- Life, goods, the gifts which my Father has given me, these infinite riches, which are worth more than any other thing in the world, am I wasting them, am I throwing them away like pearls to the pigs?
- The unfaithful steward, but wise and shrewd, suddenly changes his life, changes relations, calculations, thoughts. Today is a new day, it is the beginning of a new life, regulated according to the logics of remission, of pardon, of distribution: do I know that true wisdom is hidden in mercy?
- "Either you will love one or will love the other...." Whose servant do I want to be? In whose house do I want to live? Together with whom do I want to live my life?

A Key for Reading

"Who is the steward of the Lord?"

Luke in the parable uses the term "**administrator or steward**" or "**administration**" seven times, and thus it becomes the key word of the passage and of the message that the Lord wants to give me. Then, I try to look in Scripture for some traces, or a light which will help me to understand better and to verify my life, the administration that the Lord has entrusted to me.

In the Old Testament several times this reality is repeated, especially referring to the royal richness or to the richness of the city or of the empires: in the Books of the Chronicles, for example, it is spoken about the administrators of King David (1 Ch 27: 31; 28: 1) and also

in the Book of Esther (3: 9), Daniel (2: 49; 6: 4) and Tobias (1: 22) the meeting of administrators of the kings and the princes. It is totally worldly administration, linked to possessions, to money, to wealth, to power; therefore, bound to a negative reality, such as the accumulation, usurpation, violence. It is, in one word, an administration which ends, which is short-lived and deceitful, no matter if it is recognized that this is also, in a certain way, necessary for the good functioning of society.

The New Testament, on the other hand, immediately introduces me into a diverse dimension, higher, because it concerns the things of the spirit, of the soul, those things which do not end, do not change with the change of time and of persons. Saint Paul says: "Each one should consider himself as Christ's servant, steward entrusted with the mysteries of God. In such a matter, what is expected of stewards is that each one should be found trustworthy" (1Cor 4: 1 ff). and Peter: "Each one of you has received a special grace, so, like good stewards responsible for all these varied graces of God, put it at the service of others" (1P 4: 10). Therefore, I understand that I am also an administrator of the mysteries and of the grace of God, through the simple and poor instrument, which is my own life; in it I am called to be *faithful and good*. *But this adjective "good," is the same which John uses referring to the Shepherd, to Jesus: "kalôs" that is, beautiful and good.* And, why? Simply, because He *offers His life to the Father* for the sheep. This is the unique, true administration which is entrusted to me in this world, for the future world.

What is the shrewdness of the administrator of the Lord?

The passage says that the master praises his dishonest steward, because he acted with "astuteness" and he repeats the word "shrewd," a bit later. Perhaps a more correct translation could be "sage," that is "wise," or "prudent." It is a wisdom that results from an attentive, deep thinking, from reflection, from study and the application of the mind, of affection to something which is of great interest. As an adjective this term is found, for example in Mt 7: 24, where true wisdom is shown of the man who builds his house on the rock and not on the sand, that is the man who founds his existence on the Word of the Lord or also in Mt 25, where he says that the virgins who, together with their lamps, had the oil were wise, so that they will not be taken over by darkness, but who know how to wait always with invincible, incorruptible love, for their Spouse and Lord, when he returns. Therefore, this steward is wise and prudent, not because he takes advantage of others, but because he has known how to regulate and transform his life according to the measure and the form of the life of his Lord: he has committed himself totally, with his whole being, mind, heart, will, desire in imitating the one he serves.

Dishonesty and injustice

Another word which is repeated many times is "dishonest," "dishonesty"; the steward is said to be dishonest and thus also richness. Dishonesty is a characteristic which can corrode the being, in big things, in the great, but also in the minimum, in the small. The Greek text does not precisely use the word "dishonest," but the "administrator or steward of injustice," "richness of injustice," and "unjust in the minimum," "unjust in much." Injustice is a bad distribution, not impartial or just, not balanced; it lacks harmony, it lacks a centre which will attract all energy, all care and intent to itself; it causes fractures, wounds, pain over pain, accumulation on one side and lack of all on the other. All of us, in some way, come into contact, with the reality of injustice, because it belongs to this world. And we feel dragged on one and other side, we lose harmony, balance and beauty; and we cannot deny it because it is like that. The Gospel precisely condemns this strong lack of harmony, which is accumulation, to keep things aside, to increase them always more, possession and it shows us the way to obtain healing, which is a gift or giving, sharing, to give with an open heart, with mercy, like the Father does with us, without getting tired, without becoming less or poor.

And, what is mammon?

The word mammon appears in the whole Bible, in this chapter of Luke in (vv. 9, 11, and 13) and in Mt 6: 24. It is a Semitic term which corresponds to "riches," "possession," "gain," but it becomes almost the personification of the god-money which men serve very foolishly, slaves of that "unquenchable greed, which is idolatry" (Col. 3: 5). Here everything becomes clear, it is full light. Now, I know well which is the question which I still have, after the encounter with this Word of the Lord: "I, whom do I want to serve?" The choice is only one, unique, concrete. I keep in my heart this stupendous, marvelous and sweet verb, the verb "to serve" and I ponder it, and I draw from it all the substance of truth which it contains. The words of Joshua to the people come to my mind: "If serving Yahweh seems a bad thing to you, today you must make up your minds whom you do mean to serve!" (Jos 24: 15). I know that I am unjust, that I am an unfaithful administrator, foolish, I know that I have nothing, but today I choose, with everything that I am, to serve the Lord. (cf. Ac 20: 19; I Th 1: 9; Ga 1: 10; Rm 12: 11).

A Moment of Prayer: Psalm 49

Reflection of Wisdom on the heart which finds its riches in the presence of God

Rit. Blessed are you who are poor: the kingdom of God is yours.
Hear this, all nations, listen, all who dwell on earth, people high and low, rich and poor alike!

My lips have wisdom to utter,
my heart good sense to whisper. I listen carefully to a proverb,
I set my riddle to the music of the harp.

Rit.

Why should I be afraid in times of trouble? Malice dogs me and hems me in.
They trust in their wealth and boast of the profusion of their riches.
But no one can ever redeem himself or pay his own ransom to God,
the price for himself is too high; it can never be that he will live on for ever
and avoid the sight of the abyss.

Rit.

For he will see the wise also die no less than the fool and the brute,
and leave their wealth behind for others. In prosperity people lose their good sense, they
become no better than dumb animals.

But my soul God will ransom from the clutches of Sheol and will snatch me up.

Rit.

Do not be overawed when someone gets rich, and lives in ever greater splendor;
when he dies he will take nothing with him, his wealth will not go down with him.
Though he pampered himself while he lived
- and people praise you for looking after yourself -
he will go to join the ranks of his ancestors, who will never again see the light.

Rit.

"God wants a gratuitous love, that is a pure love...God fills the hearts, not the strongbox or coffer. What are riches good for if your heart is empty?" (*St. Augustine*).

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank you for this time spent with you, listening to your voice which spoke to me with love and infinite mercy; I feel that my life is healed only when I remain with you, in you, when I allow you to take me. You have taken in your hands my greed, which renders me dry and arid, which closes me up, and makes me sad and leaves me alone; you have

taken my insatiable avarice, which fills me with emptiness and pain; you have accepted and taken upon yourself my ambiguity and infidelity, my tired and awkward limping. Lord, I am happy when I open myself to you and show you all my wounds! Thank you for the balm of your Word and of your silence. Thank you for the breath of your Spirit, which takes away the bad breath of evil, of the enemy.

Lord, I have robbed, I know it, I have taken away what was not mine, I have buried it, I have wasted it; from now on I want to begin to return, to give back, I want to live my life as a gift always multiplied and shared among many. My life is a small thing, but in your hands it will become barrels of oil, measures of grain, consolation and food for my brothers and sisters.

Lord, I have no other words to say before such great and overflowing love, that is why I do only one thing: I open the doors of the heart and with a smile, I will accept all those whom you will send to me... (Ac 28: 30).



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

18SEP₂₀₂₂ Tell the greatest stories ever

On this Catechetical Sunday, we lift up those who give instruction as religion teachers, homilists, RCIA directors, spiritual writers, and retreat leaders. Catechism doesn't have to be dull. Fantasy writer George McDonald made spiritual realities come alive. His stories inspired C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Mark Twain, and J.M. Barrie to do the same. Want better leadership in government, businesses, parishes? Look for good storytellers. As Pope Francis said in his 2020 address to communicators, "Each of us knows different stories that have the fragrance of the Gospel, that have borne witness to the Love that transforms life. These stories cry out to be shared!"

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Today's readings:

Amos 8:4-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; Luke 16:1-13 ([135](#)).

"I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered . . . for kings and for all in authority."

19SEP₂₀₂₂ See the miracles in everyday life

Little is known about the life of Januarius, a bishop and martyr who died in the year 305, but he's famous for a miracle that continues to happen all these centuries later. Three times a year in the cathedral in Naples, Italy, the faithful gather to witness a sample of his blood, kept in sealed glass, liquify and even bubble. There is no definitive explanation, and the blood cannot be studied since the vial is not allowed to be opened out of fear of permanent damage. Sound incredible? Some say yes. But does it even compare to the extraordinary tenets of your faith? Now that's something much more consequential to marvel—every day of the year.

MEMORIAL OF JANUARIUS, BISHOP, MARTYR

Today's readings:

Proverbs 3:27-34; Luke 8:16-18 ([449](#)).

"For there is nothing hidden that will not become visible, and nothing secret that will not be known and come to light."

20SEP₂₀₂₂ Companions on the journey

South Korea has one of the largest Catholic populations in all of Asia. Andrew Kim Tae-gŏn—the first Korean priest—played a role. As did Paul Chŏng Ha-sang, a lay Catholic born of a martyr who was martyred himself. In fact, the birth of the Korean church is a laypeople's triumph. Pope John Paul II stressed this fact during his 1984 canonization of Tae-gŏn, Ha-sang, and 101 other martyrs: "Even though the Christians in the first half century had only two priests from China to assist them for a time, they deepened their unity in Christ through prayer and fraternal love. . . . The splendid flowering of the Church in Korea today is indeed the fruit of the heroic witness of the Martyrs." We, too, are called to be companions to the martyrs in building up the Body of Christ.

MEMORIAL OF ANDREW KIM TAE-GŎN, PRIEST, AND PAUL CHŎNG HA-SANG, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

Today's readings:

Proverbs 21:1-6, 10-13; Luke 8:19-21 ([450](#)).

"My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it."

21 SEP₂₀₂₂ Even tax collectors need a patron

Though we don't know much about the apostle Matthew—even whether he was the actual author of the gospel that bears his name—we do know that he was a tax collector. And because of this, he was *persona non grata* in the Jewish community. It was the occupying Romans who demanded those taxes, so Matthew and his fellow taxmen were seen as collaborators. From the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus laid out the invitation to break out of righteous categories and see beyond narrow prejudices. A reminder for us to do the same.

FEAST OF MATTHEW, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

Today's readings:

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13; Matthew 9:9-13 (643).

"I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

22 SEP₂₀₂₂ Celebrate Earth, our common home

Many Catholics are still getting used to the Season of Creation, which spans the period from September 1 (World Day of Prayer for the Care for Creation) to October 4 (Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi). Initiated in 1989 and embraced by Catholics in 2015, this ecumenical season is meant to celebrate care for our common home. Leaders encourage the faithful to pray and take action to honor and preserve our planet. With more than a week left of the season, there's time to celebrate in your own style: be it a prayerful outdoor time, an environmental letter to a legislator, or a look at the ecology encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. Seasonofcreation.org offers even more ideas.

Today's readings:

Ecclesiastes 1:2-11; Luke 9:7-9 (452).

"But Herod said, 'John I beheaded. Who then is this about whom I hear such things?'"

23 SEP₂₀₂₂ Scripture makes Billboard's Top 10

We don't often see Bible songs hit the pop music charts. But a song by singer-songwriter and social activist Pete Seeger did just that. Written in the late 1950s, the song "Turn! Turn! Turn!" would explode to international popularity in 1965 when recorded by the Byrds. Not bad for lyrics written well over 2,000 years ago! The song is based on the book of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Not every popular use of the Bible turns out well, but Seeger's did, perhaps because he left the verses largely intact. Consider other scripture passages that are music to your ears.

Today's readings:

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Luke 9:18-22 (453).

"There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every thing under the heavens."

24 SEP₂₀₂₂ The clock is ticking

The Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno is quoted as having said the entire gospel came down to this phrase: "Wake up!" That's something we can all keep in mind and take to heart when we find ourselves simply going through the motions, sleepwalking through the day. The Benedictines put it another way: "Keep death ever before you." Now that's a wake-up call if there ever was one! Do something good, kind, generous—and do it today, while there is still time!

Today's readings:

Ecclesiastes 11:9—12:8; Luke 9:43b-45 (454).

"Pay attention to what I am telling you."