

# 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, January 22, 2023

*Third Sunday in Ordinary Time*

### Opening Prayer

In the darkness of a starless night, a night of no sense,  
you, the Word of life,

like lightning in the storm of forgetfulness, entered within the bounds of doubt  
under cover of the limits of precariousness to hide the light.

Words made of silence and of the ordinary,

your human words, heralds of the secrets of the Most High:

like hooks cast into the waters of death

to find man once more, immersed in his anxious follies, and reclaim him, plundered,  
through the attractive radiance of forgiveness.

To you, Ocean of Peace and shadow of eternal Glory,

I render thanks:

Calm waters on my shore that awaits the wave, I wish to seek you!

And may the friendship of the brothers protect me when night falls on my desire for you.  
Amen.

### The Gospel Text - Matthew 4: 12-23

12 Hearing that John had been arrested he withdrew to Galilee, 13 and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, beside the lake, on the borders of Zebulon and Naphtali. 14 This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: 15 Land of Zebulon! Land of Naphtali! Way of the sea beyond Jordan. Galilee of the nations! 16 The people that lived in darkness have seen a great light; on those who lived in a country of shadow dark as death a light has dawned. 17 From then onwards Jesus began his proclamation with the message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.' 18 As he was walking by the Lake of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast into the lake with their net, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, 'Come after me and I will make you fishers of people.' 20 And at once they left their nets and followed him. 21 Going on from there he saw another pair of brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in their boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 And at once, leaving the boat and their father, they followed him. 23 He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in

their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and illness among the people.

## A Moment of Silence:

*Let us allow the voice of the Word to resonate within us.*

## Questions for reflection:

- Jesus settled by the sea: the Son of God settled beside human beings. The sea, this mysterious and boundless world, as immense in its horizon as the heavens are; the one reflected in the other, bordering on each other, distinct, a mutual reflection of calm and peace. Jesus, land of God, comes to live by the sea and becomes land of humankind. Shall we go and live beside God as the Word was before he came to us? Or is our fragile life in the flesh sufficient for us?
- The people that lived in darkness has seen a great light: immersed in darkness, men and women live their days in resigned pain and without the hope of anything changing for them. The world where faith is denied is a world immersed in darkness until light comes into it. Christ, the light of nations, has come into the world and darkness has dissipated so that the light might shine. Has the darkness within us dissipated?
- They left their nets at once and followed him. At once. Left. Followed. Difficult words for our way of life. To respond to God: yes, but calmly. To leave whatever we are doing for the Lord: yes, but first we must think well. How would it be if we did as the Apostles did: at once, left everything, followed Him?

## A Key to the Reading:

The God of the universe who created heaven and earth with his Word alone, leaves his dwelling place and comes to live beside the sea in a foreign land, to speak the language of earth so that heaven may be made known. The Son of man, too, the master from Nazareth, leaves the home of his youth to go to the Galilee of the peoples beyond the Jordan. The darkness of ignorance that flickers across the centuries is pierced by a great light. The shadows of death hear words that open new ways and new life: *«Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.»* To change itinerary, to come close to the light is not something strange for those who are familiar with the presence of the Most High. Because the eyes get used to the presence and the human heart easily forgets the past darkness when it is enjoying splendor. Repent. How? Human relationship becomes the new way along the seashore. There are brothers along the shore, pairs of brothers: Simon and Andrew, James, and John. God does not come to break these relationships but takes them up so as to fish in a new more shining life, in his life and his sea.

As he was walking... The way is a great secret of the spiritual life. We are not called to stand still, but for us also to go by the sea, the sea of the world where people are the fish, immersed in bitter, salty and inhuman waters. Fishers of men. One cannot fish without the net of love, without a father who guards the boat, without a boat to launch into the deep. The net of human relationships is the only possible weapon of evangelizers, because with love we can go on a great fishing expedition, and love must not only be proclaimed but brought. To be called in pairs means precisely this bringing of a visible, concrete love, the love of brothers who enjoy the same parents, the love in whose veins flows the same blood, the same life.

Follow me... to call others to walk, fish and witness. The nets break, but every fisherman is capable of repairing a broken net. Love is not a knick-knack that is broken with use! The art of accommodation makes precious every possible relationship among people. What matters is going, trusting in that new name, always and still called LIFE.

Those called, go and follow Jesus. But where does Jesus go? He walks all over Galilee, teaches in the synagogues, preaches the good news of the kingdom, heals all kinds of diseases and infirmities of the people. Every sea person, apostle of the Kingdom, will act like Jesus: will walk the ways of the world and stop in the marketplaces of people, will tell the good news of God and will take care of the sick and infirm, will make visible the concern of the Father for each one of his sons and daughters.

## PRAYER (Is 43: 1-21)

Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by your name, you are mine.

Should you pass through the waters, I shall be with you; or through rivers, they will not swallow you up.

Should you walk through fire, you will not suffer, and the flame will not burn you.

For I am Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Since I regard you as precious,

since you are honored and I love you,

I therefore give people in exchange for you, and nations in return for your life.

Do not be afraid, for I am with you. You yourselves are my witnesses, declares Yahweh, and the servant whom I have chosen,

so that you may know and believe me and understand that it is I. I, I am Yahweh, and there is no other Saviour but me.

Thus says Yahweh, who made a way through the sea, a path in the raging waters,

No need to remember past events,

no need to think about what was done before. Look, I am doing something new, now it emerges; can you not see it?

Yes, I am making a road in the desert and rivers in wastelands. The people I have shaped for myself will broadcast my praises.

## Contemplation

The waters of the sea that cover the earth, tell me of the flow of your life, Lord. When sky and sea blend at the horizon, it seems as if I am seeing all that you are being reloaded into our being. A flow that is a soft wave of presence and an unspeakable story of love, made up of names, events, ages, secrets, placid emotions and unforeseen troubles, a story made up of lights and grey times, of enthusiasms and calm drowsiness. This sea that is humanity invaded by your peace, contains words without end, the words of your Word who wanted profoundly to take on the vest of the sand of time. How many words on the shores and ocean beds that are silently gathered, if only I am disposed to listen, your words that the waves of life bring to shore and that are roads for navigators, ancient and new words, words never forgotten and words wrapped in mystery. Lord, may the waves of humanity not sweep me away, but may they become trails of communion for the fragile boat of my journey. May I learn from you to launch into the deep to fish in the dark nights of the human story, when the fish are more prone to allow themselves to be caught. At your word, my God, I will cast the nets, and when I bring the boats to shore, I will go on following the footsteps you have left on the shore of history, when you chose to clothe yourself with our muddy clothes.



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

**22**JAN<sub>2023</sub>

## Coming live to a parish near you!

Some of us were taught that Mass attendance "counted" if we arrived for the gospel and stayed through Communion. Most churchgoers, thankfully, are weaned from this spartan idea to the liturgical celebration. In 2019, Pope Francis designated the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time as "Word of God Sunday." While every Mass includes a healthy serving of Bible readings, annually we're invited to reflect that this is "an experience which occurs 'live' and not through hearsay," as the pope says. "We gather precisely to listen to what God has done *and still intends to do for us.*" Let's not miss a word of it!

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

### Today's readings:

Isaiah 8:23—9:3; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17; Matthew 4:12-23 (67).

*"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone."*

**23**JAN<sub>2023</sub>

## Don't let fear keep you from serving

The disease of leprosy has been curable since the mid-20th century and is actually not highly contagious, as was believed in the past, but the physical effects were devastating enough to cause tremendous fear. Mother Marianne Cope was not afraid, which she stated in 1883 in her letter of acceptance to King Kalākaua of Hawaii, who had already asked for help from—and been turned down by—more than 50 other religious congregations to care for his people who had leprosy. The German-born American sister and six others came to his aid all the way from New York. When you go beyond your fears to answer a call, you may be bridging the greatest distance of all.

DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE LEGAL PROTECTION OF UNBORN CHILDREN; MEMORIAL OF MARIANNE COPE, RELIGIOUS

### Today's readings:

Hebrews 9:15, 24-28; Mark 3:22-30 (317).

*"If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand."*

**24**JAN<sub>2023</sub>

## There is strength in gentleness

Francis de Sales is famous for his gentleness. He used it on his stubborn father, convincing him he was meant to become a priest instead of a lawyer. It was a virtue Francis tapped to win hardened Calvinists back to the Catholic faith following the Protestant Reformation, a time of much bitterness. Explaining that a "spoonful of honey gathers more flies than a barrel full of vinegar," Saint Francis practiced what he preached by greeting everyone with simple kindness, speaking good-naturedly about the goodness, truth, and beauty of the Catholic faith. "Be who you are and be that well," he reminds us in *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

MEMORIAL OF FRANCIS DE SALES, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

### Today's readings:

Hebrews 10:1-10; Mark 3:31-35 (318).

*"Behold, I come to do your will, O God."*

**25**JAN<sub>2023</sub>

## I can see clearly now

We've all had the rather unpleasant experience of "being shown the error of our ways," though none perhaps as dramatically as Saul of Tarsus, zealous persecutor of early followers of Christ. On assignment to round up these dissidents, Saul was knocked from his horse by a blinding light and a voice from heaven. Three days of blindness ensued before the scales literally "fell from his eyes" and the newly awakened apostle and great evangelist we know as Saint Paul emerged. Don't wait to be knocked to the ground before considering how your own life may have gone astray. Pray that anything that blinds you may fall away from your vision.

FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

**Today's readings:**

Acts 22:3-16 *or* Acts 9:1-22; Mark 16:15-18 (519).

*"Saul, my brother, regain your sight."*

**26**JAN<sub>2023</sub>

## Our moment is now

In the '90s, it seemed everyone wanted in on the "dot.com" internet startup craze. Many were excited to be in on the ground floor of something brand new. It's tempting to think that Timothy and Titus (both of whom have letters in the New Testament addressed to them) were like the dot.com entrepreneurs when it came to the new, exciting religion of Christianity. In contrast, today's Christianity can seem weighed down by centuries of precedent and proscriptions. Titus and Timothy dealt with plenty of church trouble in their time, however, from division to drunkenness to false teaching. Their witness reminds us to pray for the strength to rise to the challenges of the moment we've been given, just as they did.

MEMORIAL OF TIMOTHY AND TITUS, BISHOPS

**Today's readings:**

2 Timothy 1:1-8 *or* Titus 1:1-5 (520); Mark 4:21-25 (320).

*"The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you."*

**27**JAN<sub>2023</sub>

## Stay the course

Sometimes when the going gets tough, if they are honest, the tough want to curl up under the blankets and never come out! Life is not always an easy road, even when we feel called by God. But we're not alone on the journey. We can look to the saints to see how they've weathered the storms. Today, on the feast of Angela Merici, educator and founder of the Ursuline Sisters, let us take heart in her wisdom. "Strive with all your might to keep yourselves as you have been called by God, and seek out and desire all those means and ways that are necessary to persevere and prosper till the end."

MEMORIAL OF ANGELA MERICI, RELIGIOUS FOUNDER

**Today's readings:**

Hebrews 10:32-39; Mark 4:26-34 (321).

*"We are not among those who draw back and perish, but among those who have faith and will possess life."*

**28**JAN<sub>2023</sub>

## Be resolute

Sometimes your commitment to your faith or choice of a vocation or calling can lead to uncomfortable conflicts with loved ones who have a different idea of who you should be or how you should live your life. Even a saint as illustrious as Saint Thomas had to struggle against opposition. His family was so opposed to his decision to enter the Dominican order that they had him abducted and held captive for a year! Thomas stood firm and they finally relented, and as a result the church gained perhaps its greatest theologian. Stand firm when you need to—who knows what God has in store for you!

MEMORIAL OF THOMAS AQUINAS, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

**Today's readings:**

Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19; Mark 4:35-41 (322).

*"He asked them, 'Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?'"*