

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, March 5, 2023

Second Sunday of Lent

Initial Prayer:

Oh God, who in the glorious Transfiguration of Christ, the Lord, you confirmed the mysteries of faith by the witness of the Law and of the prophets and you have admirably pre-announced our definite adoption as your children, may we listen to the Word of your Beloved Son to become coheirs of his immortal life.

Reading of the Gospel – Mt 17:1-9

1 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 There in their presence he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as dazzling as light. 3 And suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. 4 Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord,' he said, 'it is wonderful for us to be here; if you want me to, I will make three shelters here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' 5 He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and suddenly from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favor. Listen to him.' 6 When they heard this, the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. 7 But Jesus came up and touched them, saying, 'Stand up, do not be afraid.' 8 And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but Jesus. 9 As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order, 'Tell no one about this vision until the Son of man has risen from the dead.'

Moments of Silence:

So that God's Word may enter in us and enlighten our life.

MEDITATIO

Key for the Reading:

The Gospel according to Matthew insists on the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is why Matthew's Gospel is the Gospel of the Church, that is of the People of God guided by its Head and Master Jesus, the Christ. The text which narrates the event of the Transfiguration forms part of a section of the Gospel in which, the Evangelist develops the theme of the beginning of the coming of the Kingdom in a group of disciples who gradually will constitute the Body of the Church. We find the account of the Transfiguration in all the Synoptic Gospels (Mk 9, 2-8; Lk 9, 28-36), and we also find a reference to this event in the second letter of Peter (2 Pt 1, 16-18). The text of Matthew (17, 1-9) though presents some diversity. The account is found immediately after the first announcement of the Passion and the mentioning of the conditions necessary for the following of Christ and also the event of the glorification of the Son of Man in the glory of the Father (Mt 16, 21-28). Before the glorification, Jesus has to go to Jerusalem for the fulfillment of the Pascal mystery, that is: Passion, Death and Resurrection (Mt 16, 21). Those who desire and wish to follow Jesus have to deny themselves and then, also carry their cross to follow the Master. (Mt 16, 24). Only in this way can we participate in his glory: "Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 16, 25). Those who do not accept the event of the Cross in the life of Christ and therefore in the program of following him, are considered by Jesus as "Satan", because they do not think "according to God but as human beings do" (Mt 16, 23). The expression which Jesus addresses to Peter: "Get behind me, Satan!" (Mt 16, 23) reminds us of a similar expression used by Jesus in the parable of the final judgment "When the Son of man comes in his glory", (Mt 25, 31-46): "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25, 41). This curse is addressed to those who do not know the Lord and thus they do not form part of his Kingdom.

Then follows the account of the Transfiguration (Mt 17, 1-9) with the question on the coming of Elijah and the healing of the epileptic demoniac (Mt 17, 10-21). After these events Jesus, for the second time, announces his Passion (Mt 17, 22) and concerning the question of the payment of taxes for the needs of the temple, Jesus plays on the words regarding the reality of son-ship (Mt 17, 24-27). In the Transfiguration the Father declares that Jesus is "My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him" (Mt 17, 5). We are also sons, in him, of the same Father (Mt 5, 45; Mt 17 25-26).

Jesus then presents himself as our guide on the journey towards the Kingdom. In the account of the Transfiguration Jesus is presented as the new Moses who encounters God "on a high mountain" (Mt 17, 1) in the "bright cloud" (Mt 17, 5), with his face shining (Mt 17, 2). Moses also encounters God in the cloud on Mount Sinai (Ex 24, 15-18) with the bright face (Ex 34, 29-35). Elijah also encounters the Lord on Mount Horeb, the mountain of God (1 K 19, 9-13). Just as in the event of Sinai (Ex 19, 20; 33-34), here also in the Transfiguration there is the revelation of the new law. To listen to the Beloved Son in whom God the Father is pleased (Mt 17, 5). This new law, given by God on Tabor by means of the new Moses, reminds us what the Patriarch says in the Book of Deuteronomy: "Yahweh, your God will raise up a prophet like me; you will listen to him" (Dt 18, 15). In this text of the Transfiguration, more important than the law, of which Jesus is the fulfillment (that is why

after the vision the Apostles “saw no one, but Jesus alone” (Mt 17, 7), the revelation on the part of the Father is stressed who proclaims the divine filiation of Jesus Christ. Besides this proclamation in the Transfiguration, the identity of the Son is proclaimed two other times in the Gospel of Matthew: at the beginning and at the end. After the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, a voice from heaven says: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am pleased” (Mt 3, 17); and when Jesus dies on the Cross, the centurion exclaims using words of revelation and of faith: “Truly this one was the Son of God!” (Mt 27, 54). Besides, in this proclamation, the Father reveals Jesus as the servant of the Lord, pre-announced by Isaiah: “Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights” (Is 42, 1).

The discovery of the identity of the Son, arouses in the three witnesses the fear of God, falling on their faces (Mt 17, 6). Already at the beginning of the Gospel, in the birth of Jesus, the Magi “Entering into the house saw the Child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees, they did him homage” (Mt 2, 11). A similar reaction is also found in the Gospel of John, after the self-revelation of the Lord, in the account when Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane. Jesus says to them: I am he!” [...] As soon as he said, “I am he”, they moved back and fell on the ground” (Jn 18, 5-6). Also in the Book of Revelation, John “in ecstasy” (Rv 1, 10), saw “one similar to a son of man [...] his face like the sun shining with all its force” (Rv 1, 12-16), and because of all these visions he fell at his feet like dead (Rv 1, 17). The apostle in Rm 14: 11 and Ph 2:10 will proclaim that before the Lord, “in the name of Jesus every knee will bow before him in heaven, on earth and in the underworld; every tongue shall proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This vision is strictly linked to the mystery of the Passover, it seems like an apparition of the Risen Jesus in all his glory, it is a pre-announcement of the future life. For this reason, “coming down from the mountain, Jesus ordered them: “Tell no one about this vision until the Son of man has risen from the dead” (Mt 17, 9).

To Orientate the Meditation and the Realization:

- Read once again the passage from the Gospel, and find in the Bible all the texts quoted in the key to the reading. Try to find other parallel texts which can help you to penetrate deeper into the text in the meditation.
- Some questions:
 - Have you ever asked yourself who the Person of Christ is? Your vision of the identity of Jesus corresponds to that proclaimed in the Transfiguration?
 - What meaning does the proclamation of Jesus as Son of God have in your life?
 - Jesus cannot be understood without the Pascal mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection. What sense does this mystery have for you? How do you live it daily?

ORATIO

Psalm 97:

I seek your face, oh Lord, show me your face. Yahweh is king!
Let earth rejoice, the many isles be glad! Cloud, black cloud enfolds him,
saving justice and judgement the foundations of his throne. I seek your face, oh Lord,
show me your face.

The mountains melt like wax, before the Lord of all the earth.
The heavens proclaim his saving justice, all nations see his glory.
For you are Yahweh,

Most High over all the earth, far transcending all gods. I seek your face, oh Lord, show me your face.

Concluding Prayer:

Let us rejoice, Beloved,
and let us go forth to behold ourselves in your beauty to the mountain and to the hill, to
where the pure water flows, and further, deep into the thicket.
(John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, 36)

CONTEMPLATIO

“Let us go forth to behold ourselves in your beauty”

This means: Let us so act that by means of this loving activity we may attain to the vision of ourselves in your beauty in eternal life. That is: That I be so transformed in your beauty that we may be alike in beauty, and both behold ourselves in your beauty, possessing then your very beauty; this, in such a way that each looking at the other may see in the other their own beauty, since both are your beauty alone, I being absorbed in your beauty; hence, I shall see you in your beauty, and you will see me in your beauty, and I shall see myself in you in your beauty, and you will see yourself in me in your beauty; that I may resemble you in your beauty, and you resemble me in your beauty, and my beauty be your beauty and your beauty my beauty; wherefore I shall be you in your beauty, and you will be me in your beauty, because your very beauty will be my beauty; and thus we shall behold each other in your beauty. (John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, 36/5)



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

05MAR₂₀₂₃ - Honor the unnamed

The Bible is full of unnamed actors. Many are women: identified simply as mothers, wives, and daughters. While seven blessings promote the name of Abraham, it's the rare woman like Mary who's called blessed "for generations" in her canticle. Today we recall the unnamed wife of Chief Patricio de Hinachuba, an Apalachee laywoman among 57 martyrs in the Florida territory missions between 1549-1715, all currently up for sanctification. These martyrs included priests and catechists, native peoples, soldiers, and children. For all faithful, nameless women, we give thanks.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Today's readings:

Genesis 12:1-4a; 2 Timothy 1:8b-10; Matthew 17:1-9 (25).

"I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

06MAR₂₀₂₃ - Read up!

Could your Catholic school library need some new picks? How about your book club for the adults? This Women's History Month, learn more about a remarkable Catholic black woman writer, Ellen Tarry (1906-2008). She attended Catholic school as a girl and converted to Catholicism and later became a journalist and author who was part of the Harlem Renaissance. Her writing included producing the first African-American picture book, writing a newspaper column on racial injustice and racial pride, and penning her memoir *The Third Door: The Autobiography of an American Negro Woman*. She also wrote biographies for youth and adult readers of Catholic saints Katherine Drexel and Martin de Porres and the Venerable Pierre Toussaint. You might be reading Tarry beyond March!

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Today's readings:

Daniel 9:4b-10; Luke 6:36-38 (230).

"Give and gifts will be given to you."

07MAR₂₀₂₃ - Beyond distinctions

Devotion to Jesus seriously conflicted with Roman rule in the second century, with citizens expected to worship the emperor instead. Thus, the fate of two young mothers, Perpetua and Felicity: forced into a public amphitheater to be killed by wild beasts, just because they wouldn't renounce Jesus. But Christian faith challenged social convention in other ways, too. Normally, Felicity—as Perpetua's slave—wouldn't be seen as her equal. But belief in Jesus, as Saint Paul writes, makes brothers and sisters of all. Take Perpetua's final words to heart: "Stand fast in the faith, and love one another, all of you."

MEMORIAL OF PERPETUA AND FELICITY, MARTYRS

Today's readings:

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Matthew 23:1-12 (231).

"Do not be called 'Master'; you have but one master, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant."

08MAR₂₀₂₃ - A brother called to heal

On this day, the church commemorates Saint John of God, a Portuguese religious brother who—like Saint Ignatius of Loyola—was a military man who experienced a sudden conversion. In fact, the two men (along with Saint Teresa) shared a spiritual mentor in Saint John of Ávila. A sermon from the priest moved John of God to repent of his former excesses, so much so that it was mistaken for a mental health crisis; he was quickly institutionalized. Later engaging in work with the poor, he founded the Brothers Hospitallers in 1572, who continue to care for the

sick around the world—including as official caretakers of the pope. In an age of increased mental health awareness, may we always remember John's holy life and recognize our call to serve those in need.

MEMORIAL OF JOHN OF GOD, RELIGIOUS

Today's readings:

Jeremiah 18:18-20; Matthew 20:17-28 ([232](#)).

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me."

09MAR₂₀₂₃ - Priceless service

It's entirely appropriate that the Memorial of Frances of Rome coincides with a gospel that tells us in no uncertain terms to care for the poor. Frances of Rome was a wealthy Italian married woman in the early 1400s, a time of great instability and poverty in Italy. She poured her family treasure into efforts to feed and heal the poor. She was recognized for her piety and compassion and founded a religious order dedicated to serving suffering people, now known as the Oblates of St. Frances of Rome. Upon her husband's death, she became superior of the order. What can you do for the poor or sick in your corner of the world?

MEMORIAL OF FRANCES OF ROME, RELIGIOUS

Today's readings:

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Luke 16:19-31 ([233](#)).

"Lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores."

10MAR₂₀₂₃ - Celebrate sisters

During Catholic Sisters Week, we celebrate the good works of Catholic sisters collectively and individually; tell stories of Catholic sisters we love, respect, admire; and share information about becoming a Catholic sister, including directing people to [VISION VocationNetwork.org](http://VISIONVocationNetwork.org). But, most of all, we focus on the truth that a religious vocation reveals: God is all we need. As Catholic nun and Doctor of the Church Saint Teresa of Ávila observed: "Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices."

LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

Today's readings:

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46 ([234](#)).

"The Kingdom of God will be . . . given to a people that will produce its fruit."

11MAR₂₀₂₃ - Confession heals the soul

Catholics are encouraged to partake of the sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) as much as possible, but especially during Lent, because confession is good for the soul. None of us is perfect, and all of us carry burdens that could be lightened through honest reflection and repentance. Other religions include a confessional practice as well, attesting to the universal need: Jews confess "We have sinned" in the Yom Kippur service. Confession is part of the Hindu *Prāyaścitta*. In Islam, the act of seeking forgiveness from God for sins is called *Istighfar*. Buddhist monks confess their sins to other monks. Check the bulletin, and find time for Confession. You'll feel better for it.

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Today's readings:

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32 ([235](#)).

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you."