

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.

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Lectio Divina

Sunday, June 11, 2023

Corpus Christi Sunday

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send Your Spirit to help us 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 silence in us 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 on the way to 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 the Father to us and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading – John 6: 51-58

a) A Key to the Reading:

On the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ we meditate on the last part of the long discourse on the Bread of Life. During this discourse, the Gospel of John helps us to understand the deep meaning of the multiplication of the bread and of the Eucharist. During the reading, we will try to be attentive to the words of Jesus which help people to understand the sign of the Bread of Life.

b) A Division of the Text to Help in the Reading:

- John 6: 51: The initial affirmation which summarizes everything
- John 6: 52: The contrary reaction of the Jews
- John 6: 53-54: Jesus' response affirms what He said before
- John 6: 55-58: Jesus draws the conclusion for life

c) The Text:

51 I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, for the life of the world.' 52 Then the Jews started arguing among themselves, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' 53 Jesus replied to them, ' In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 Anyone who does eat My flesh and drink My blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day. 55 For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood lives in Me and I live in that person. 57 As the living Father sent Me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats Me will also draw life from Me. 58 This is the bread which has come down from heaven; it is not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live forever.

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 part of the text struck me the most? Why?
- How many times in the text is the word life used, and what does it tell us about life?
- Jesus says, "I am the living Bread which has come down from heaven." What does this mean? Look for an answer in the text.
- What does this text tell us about the Person of Jesus: titles, functions, etc.?
- In what way does this text help us to understand better the significance of the Eucharist?

To Go Deeper into the Discourse of the Bread of Life.

a) Context in which our text is situated in the discourse of the Bread of Life:

The discourse on the Bread of Life (Jn 6: 22-71) is a sequence of seven brief dialogues between Jesus and the persons who were with Him after the multiplication of the loaves. Jesus tries to open the eyes of people, making them understand that it is not sufficient to struggle to get the material bread. The daily struggle for material bread does not touch the roots if it is not accompanied by mysticism. The human being does not only live by bread! (Deut 8: 3) The seven brief dialogues are a very beautiful

catechesis which explains to people the profound significance of the multiplication of the loaves and of the Eucharist. Throughout the dialogue appear the exigencies which the living out of faith in Jesus traces for our life. People react. They remain surprised by the words of Jesus. But Jesus does not give in. He does not change His requirements. And because of this, many abandon Him. Even now the same thing happens: when the Gospel begins to demand a commitment, many people abandon it. Insofar as the discourse of Jesus advances, less people remain around Him. At the end, only the twelve remain and Jesus cannot even count on them!

Here is the sequence of the seven dialogues which compose the long discourse on the Bread of Life:

- John 6: 22-27: 1st Dialogue: People seek Jesus because they want more bread
- John 6: 28-33: 2nd Dialogue: Jesus asks the people to work for the true bread
- John 6: 34-40: 3rd Dialogue: The true bread is to do the will of God
- John 6: 41-51: 4th Dialogue: He who opens himself to God accepts Jesus and His proposal
- John 6: 52-58: 5th Dialogue: Flesh and Blood: expression of life and of the total gift
- John 6: 59-66: 6th Dialogue: Without the light of the Spirit these words cannot be understood
- John 6: 67-71: 7th Dialogue: Peter's confession

b) Comment on the seven dialogues which make up the discourse of the Bread of Life:

The year 2005 is the Year of the Eucharist. This is the reason why, instead of commenting only on the eight verses of the Gospel of this Sunday (John 6: 51-58), we have thought of giving a general key to understand the seven brief dialogues which make up the whole discourse. A global vision of the whole will help to clarify the meaning and the importance of the eight verses of the liturgical text of this day of Corpus Christi.

- 1st Dialogue - John 6: 22-27: The people look for Jesus because they want more bread
22 Next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side saw that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not got into the boat with His disciples, but that the disciples had set off by themselves. 23 Other boats, however, had put in from Tiberias, near the place where the bread had been eaten. 24 When the people saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into those boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. 25 When they found Him on the other side, they said to Him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' 26 Jesus answered, 'In all truth I tell you, you are looking for Me not because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. 27 Do not work for food that goes bad, but work for food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, for on Him the Father, God Himself, has set His seal.

The people see the miracle, but they do not understand that it is a question of a sign of something greater and more profound. They stop only on the superficial aspect of the fact, in the distribution of the food. They look for the bread of life, but only for the body. According to the people, Jesus does something which Moses had already done in the past: feed everyone. And the people wanted the past to be repeated. But Jesus asks the

people to take one more step. Do not work for food that goes bad, but work for food that endures for eternal life.

- 2nd Dialogue – John 6: 28-33: Jesus asks the people to work for the true bread
28 Then they said to Him, 'What must we do if we are to carry out God's work?' 29 Jesus gave them this answer, 'This is carrying out God's work: you must believe in the One He has sent.' 30 So they said, 'What sign will You yourself do, the sight of which will make us believe in You? What work will You do? 31 Our fathers ate manna in the desert; as scripture says, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat."' 32 Jesus answered them. 'In all truth I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; 33 for the bread of God is the bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.'

The people asked, 'What must we do if we are to carry out God's work?' And Jesus answers, 'Believe in the One God has sent!' That is, believe in Jesus. And the people react, 'Give us a sign to understand that You are truly the One sent by God. Our fathers ate the manna that Moses gave them! According to the people, Moses is and continues to be the great leader, in whom to believe. If Jesus wants the people to believe in Him, He has to give them a greater sign than that given by Moses. Jesus answers that the bread given by Moses was not the true bread, because it did not guarantee the life of anyone. All died in the desert. The true bread of God is the one which overcomes death and gives life! Jesus tries to help people to liberate themselves from the schema of the past. For Jesus, fidelity to the past does not mean to close up oneself in the things of the past and to refuse or reject renewal. Fidelity to the past means to accept what is new, which is the fruit of the seed planted in the past.

- 3rd Dialogue - John 6: 34-40: The true bread is to do the will of God.
34 'Sir,' they said, 'give us that bread always.' 35 Jesus answered them, 'I am the bread of life. No one who comes to Me will ever hunger; no one who believes in Me will ever thirst. 36 But, as I have told you, you can see Me and still you do not believe. 37 Everyone whom the Father gives Me will come to Me; I will certainly not reject anyone who comes to Me, 38 because I have come from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me. 39 Now the will of Him who sent Me is that I should lose nothing of all that He has given to Me, but that I should raise it up on the last day. 40 It is my Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and that I should raise that person up on the last day.'

The people said, 'Lord, give us that bread always!' They thought that Jesus was speaking of a special bread. Then, Jesus answers clearly, 'I am the bread of life!' To eat the bread of heaven is the same as believing in Jesus and accepting the path that He has shown us, that is, "My food is to do the will of the Father who is in heaven!" (Jn 4: 34). This is the true food which nourishes the person, which always gives us new life. It is a seed that guarantees resurrection!

- 4th Dialogue – John 6: 41-51: He who opens himself to God accepts Jesus and His proposal
41 Meanwhile the Jews were complaining to each other about Him, because He had said, 'I am the bread that has come down from heaven.' 42 They were saying, 'Surely this is Jesus son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know. How can He now say, "I have come down from heaven?" ' 43 Jesus said in reply to them, 'Stop complaining to each other. 44 'No one can come to Me unless drawn by the Father who sent Me, and I will raise that person up on the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, They will all be taught by God; everyone who has listened to the Father, and learned from Him, comes to me. 46 Not that anybody has seen the Father, except Him who has His being from God: He has seen the Father. 47 In all truth I tell you, everyone who believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate manna in the desert and they are

dead; 50 but this is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that a person may eat it and not die. 51 I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, for the life of the world.'

The discourse becomes more demanding. Now it is the Jews, that is, the leaders of the people, who murmur, "Is He not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can He say that He has come down from heaven?" They considered themselves capable of knowing and of recognizing the things that come from God. But they are mistaken. If they were truly open to the things of God, they would feel the impulse of God in themselves which attracts them toward Jesus and would recognize that Jesus comes from God (Jn 6: 45). In the celebration of the Passover, the Jews remembered the bread of the desert. Jesus helps them to take a step forward. The one who celebrates the Passover remembering only the bread which the fathers ate in the desert, will die just as all of them died! The true meaning of the Passover is not that of recalling the manna which in the past fell from heaven, but to accept Jesus, the Bread of Life who came down from Heaven and to follow the path that He has traced. It does not mean to eat the flesh of the paschal lamb, but the flesh of Jesus, who came down from heaven to give life to the world!

- 5th Dialogue - John 6: 52-58: Flesh and Blood: the expression of life and of the total gift.

52 Then the Jews started arguing among themselves, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?' 53 Jesus replied to them, 'In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 Anyone who does eat My flesh and drink My blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day. 55 For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood lives in Me and I live in that person. 57 As the living Father sent Me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats Me will also draw life from Me. 58 This is the bread which has come down from heaven; it is not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.'

The Jews reacted, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" They did not understand these words of Jesus, because the profound respect for life demanded that from the time of the Old Testament it was forbidden to drink blood, because the blood was the sign of life (Deut 12: 16, 23). Besides, it was close to the Passover and in a few days everyone would have eaten the meat and the blood of the Paschal Lamb in the celebration of the night of the Passover. They took the words of Jesus literally. That is why they did not understand. To eat the flesh of Jesus meant to accept Jesus as the new Paschal Lamb. His blood will free them from slavery. To drink the blood of Jesus meant to assimilate His way of life which characterized the life of Jesus. What gives life is not to celebrate the manna of the past, but rather to eat this new bread which is Jesus, His flesh and His blood. Participating in the Eucharistic Supper, we assimilate His life, His gift of self, His dedication.

- 6th Dialogue – John 6: 59-66: Without the light of the Spirit these words cannot be understood,

59 This is what He taught at Capernaum in the synagogue. 60 After hearing it, many of His followers said, 'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?' 61 Jesus was aware that His followers were complaining about it and said, 'Does this disturb you? 62 What if you should see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before? 63 'It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh has nothing to offer. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. 64 'But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the outset who did not believe and who was to betray Him. 65 He went on,

'This is why I told you that no one could come to Me except by the gift of the Father.' 66 After this, many of His disciples went away and accompanied Him no more.

Here ends the discourse of Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum. Many of His disciples thought, 'Jesus is exaggerating too much! He is putting an end to the celebration of the Passover! He is taking the central place of our religion!' For this reason many people abandoned the community and no longer followed Jesus. Jesus reacted by saying, "It is the spirit who gives life; the flesh has nothing to offer. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." We should not take what he says literally. It is only with the help of the light of the Holy Spirit that it is possible to understand the full meaning of everything that Jesus says (Jn 14: 25-26; 16: 12-13).

- 7th Dialogue - Jn 6: 67-71: Confession of Peter.

67 Then Jesus said to the Twelve, 'What about you, do you want to go away too?' 68 Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, 69 and we believe; we have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.' 70 Jesus replied to them, 'Did I not choose the Twelve of you? Yet one of you is a devil.' 71 He meant Judas son of Simon Iscariot, since this was the man, one of the Twelve, who was to betray Him.

At the end only the twelve remained. Jesus said to them, "What about you, do you want to go away too?" For Jesus, what is important is not the number of people who are around Him. He does not change the discourse when the message does not please others. Jesus speaks to reveal the Father and not to please others.

He prefers to remain alone, more than being accompanied by persons who do not accept the Father's project. The response of Peter is beautiful: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life!" Even without understanding everything, Peter accepts Jesus and believes in Him. Despite all his limitations, Peter is not like Nicodemus, who wished to see everything clearly, to confirm his own ideas.

- To deepen more: Eucharist and New Exodus

In describing the multiplication of the loaves, the Gospel of John suggests a parallel with Exodus: Jesus who walks on the water and the discourse of the Bread of Life. This parallel shows that through the Eucharist a new Exodus takes place. The Eucharist helps us to live in a permanent state of Exodus:

- i) The multiplication of the loaves (Jn 6: 1-15):

Jesus has before Him a hungry crowd and the challenge to guarantee bread for all. Even though Moses had to face this challenge during the time of itinerancy of the people in the desert (Ex 16: 1-35; Num 11: 18-23). After having eaten, the people fed and satisfied recognize in Jesus the new Moses, the "Prophet who is to come into the world" (Jn 6: 14), according to what has been announced in the Law of the Covenant (Deut 18: 15-22).

- ii) Jesus walks on the water (Jn 6: 16-21):

In Exodus, the people are itinerant in order to obtain freedom and face and overcome the sea (Ex 14:22). Jesus also, like Moses, dominates and overcomes the sea, preventing the boat of his disciples from being swallowed up by the waves, and does in such a way that they get safely to the other shore.

- iii) The discourse on the Bread of Life (Jn 6: 22-58):

The discourse evokes Chapter 16 of the book of Exodus which describes the story of the manna. When Jesus speaks of "a food which does not perish" (Jn 6: 27) He hears some people "murmuring" or complaining against Jesus

(Jn 6: 41), do the same thing that the Israelites in the desert, who doubted the presence of God in their long journey (Ex 16: 2; 17: 3; Num 11: 1). The Jews doubted the presence of God in Jesus of Nazareth (Jn 6: 42). Jesus is the true Manna who gives us eternal life.

Psalm 85 (84)

Justice and Peace Embrace One Another.

Yahweh, You are gracious to Your land, You bring back the captives of Jacob, You take away the guilt of Your people, You blot out all their sins. You retract all Your anger, you renounce the heat of your fury.

Bring us back, God our Savior, appease Your indignation against us! Will You be angry with us for ever? Will You prolong your wrath age after age? Will You not give us life again, for Your people to rejoice in You? Show us, Lord, Your faithful love, grant us Your saving help.

I am listening. What is God's message? Yahweh's message is peace for His people, for His faithful, if only they renounce their folly. His saving help is near for those who fear Him, His glory will dwell in our land. Faithful love and loyalty join together, saving justice and peace embrace. Loyalty will spring up from the earth, and justice will lean down from heaven.

Yahweh will Himself give prosperity, and our soil will yield its harvest. Justice will walk before Him, treading out a path.

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank You 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 what 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.

11JUN₂₀₂₃ - We are one

Unity is what our sacrament of Communion is about: oneness with God and each other. Yet, because we're human, that communion is necessarily paired up with another sacrament that does the work of reconciling. When unity gets torn, reconciliation repairs the damage. Lately, toxic polarization has been shredding our national unity, creating an illusion of insurmountable division. Media sources sharpen the knives of contrasting worldviews, leading to anxiety and depression, fear and violence. Trust in unity. Resist being recruited in the polarization game. SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (CORPUS CHRISTI)

Today's readings:

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; *Lauda Sion*; John 6:51-58 ([167](#)).

"We, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."

12JUN₂₀₂₃ - Unexpected blessings

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offers the Beatitudes, a list of those who are blessed—some of whom are not who listeners would expect to hear are blessed: the poor in spirit, the mournful, the meek, and the persecuted. In some Bible versions, "blessed" is translated as "happy," which makes it even harder to believe that those named could possibly be that! Jesus was always turning conventional wisdom inside out and upside down—enlightening and enraging people alike. Two thousand years later, we're still trying to figure out how to be happy. If pursuing what the world says "should" make you happy doesn't, take a cue from Jesus and try flipping that faulty logic on its head!

Today's readings:

2 Corinthians 1:1-7; Matthew 5:1-12 ([359](#)).

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

13JUN₂₀₂₃ - Go for the grandeur

Church historian Sophronius Clasen liked to say Saint Anthony preached the "grandeur of Christianity," using allegory and symbolic explanations to convey biblical wisdom. Anyone can spot such examples in the Sermons of Saint Anthony, including: "Genesis says: The spirit of God moved over the waters Just as the mind of a craftsman broods over the work he is going to do, and as the bird broods over the egg from which her young will be hatched, so the Spirit of God brooded over the waters, from which were to be made all things." Let Anthony's words stir your heart today.

MEMORIAL OF ANTHONY OF PADUA, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Today's readings:

2 Corinthians 1:18-22; Matthew 5:13-16 ([360](#)).

"Just so, your light must shine before others."

14JUN₂₀₂₃ - A salute to justice

On this day each year, the United States commemorates the adoption of the national flag, our venerable Stars and Stripes. "A new constellation," it was said to represent, in the vast array of the world powers. But as we, in Christian charity, work for a better world as good and faithful Americans, we must be careful to live as citizens of heaven first and foremost, workers of light rather than earthly empire, children of God and not of worldly dominion. May our Flag Day commemorations also remember those who have been forgotten in the American project and whose cries for justice may still be unanswered. May our waving of "Old Glory" be for the glory of the God above all.

Today's readings:

2 Corinthians 3:4-11; Matthew 5:17-19 ([361](#)).

"For if what was going to fade was glorious, how much more will what endures be glorious."

15JUN₂₀₂₃ - The law as Jesus taught it

Matthew uses the word "righteousness" seven times in his gospel. What is he getting at? The U.S. bishops boil it down to this: "While righteousness in the new age will continue to mean conduct that is in accordance with the law, it will be conduct in accordance with the law as expounded and interpreted by Jesus." In other words, we need to absorb the full example and teachings of Jesus to live a righteous life. That's a tall order, which is precisely why we need each other for support and guidance. How can you support a fellow disciple today?

Today's readings:

2 Corinthians 3:15—4:1, 3-6; Matthew 5:20-26 ([362](#)).

"I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

16JUN₂₀₂₃ - Put your heart into it

On May 25, 1899, Pope Leo XIII promulgated the encyclical *Annum sacrum*, which consecrated the entire world to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Leo called this the "great act" of his papacy. In an interview with Catholic News Service, Father Ambrose Dobrozsi of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati says that this solemnity, "shows that humanity still needs and longs for a compassionate and all-powerful God. ... In a society where some live in decadence and prideful luxury while others are destitute, the burning love of Christ's Sacred Heart reminds us that the fires of his mercy are also fires of justice." Consecrate your own heart to the effort to create a more compassionate and just world.

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Today's readings:

Deuteronomy 7:6-11; 1 John 4:7-16; Matthew 11:25-30 ([170](#)).

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves."

17JUN₂₀₂₃ - A heartfelt conversion is possible

Most of us would rather not reveal our inner lives since we often harbor some measure of anger, judgment, prejudice, hatred, lust, envy, jealousy, bitterness, resentment, and fear. Jesus said that all evil in the world springs forth from the human heart. But the Immaculate Heart of Mary is a celebration of a different kind of inner life, with virtues beyond measure and beyond our imagination. Mary, the ultimate intercessor, will help us convert the vices of the heart into virtues.

MEMORIAL OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Today's readings:

2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Luke 2:41-51 ([364](#); [573](#)).

"His mother kept all these things in her heart."