

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 14, 2024

Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

Good Shepherd, my Father, today You also come down from the eternal mountains and bring with You Your flock and lead it towards green pastures, of fresh grass, of good water. Today You send ahead of You Your dearest or favorite lamb, the Lamb whom You love with an incommensurable love; You give us Your Son Jesus, the Messiah. Behold, He is here! I beg You, help me to recognize Him, to fix my gaze on Him, my desire, my expectation. Make me follow Him, that I do not separate myself from Him, that I enter His house and remain there always. His house, oh Father, are You, yourself. I want to enter in You, I want to live. May the breath of Your Holy Spirit attract me, support me and unite me in love to You and to Your Son, my Lord, today and forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading - John 1: 35-42

To Place this Passage in its Context:

This passage introduces us to the beginning of the evangelical account of John, clearly showing the succession of one day after another in of a whole week. Here we are already on the third day since John the Baptist began to give his witness of Jesus with the invitation to the disciples to follow the Lord, the Lamb of God. The ministry of Jesus begins during these days, with the Word of the Father who descends in the midst of men to meet them and to speak with them and dwell among them.

This place is Bethany, beyond the Jordan, where John baptized. Here the encounter with the Word of God takes place and the new life begins.

To Help in the Reading of the Passage:

- vv. 35-36: John the Baptist lives a very strong experience of encounter with Jesus, in fact it is precisely here, on the third day, that he recognizes Him fully, that he proclaims Him with his whole strength and shows Him as the true way to follow, as the life to be lived. Here John diminishes himself to the point of disappearing and grows as witness to the light.
- vv. 37-39: Having accepted the witness of their master, the disciples of John begin to follow Jesus. After having listened to His voice, they meet the Word and allow themselves to be challenged by it. Jesus looks at them, He knows them and begins His dialogue with them. He takes them with Him, introduces them to the place of His dwelling, and makes them remain with Him. The Evangelist indicates the exact hour of this face-to-face encounter between Jesus and the first disciples.
- vv. 40-42: Immediately, the witness flares up and spreads; Andrew cannot keep silent about what he has seen and heard, what he has experienced and lived, and immediately becomes a missionary, calling his brother Peter to come to encounter Jesus. He, fixing His look on that man, calls him and transforms his life: he was Simon, now he becomes Peter.

Text:

John was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" — which translated means Teacher —, "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where Jesus was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" — which is translated Christ —. Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas" — which is translated Peter.

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

I remain in silence and allow that these simple, but powerful words, envelope me, take possession of my life. I allow Jesus, who is coming, to fix His look on me, I allow Him to ask me, like He asked them: "What are you looking for?" and I allow Him to take me with Him, to His house. Because, yes, I want to dwell near Him ...

Listen More Attentively to This Passage

Now, I try to listen more attentively to this passage, by taking every word, every verb, being attentive to the movements, and to the looks. I really try to encounter the Lord in this page, allowing myself to be searched and known by Him.

- **“The next day John stood there again”**

In these words I feel the insistence of the search. I feel the faith of John the Baptist which grows. The days are going by. The experience of the encounter with Jesus is intensified. John does not give up, does not get tired, but rather, he always becomes more sure, more convinced, and enlightened. I place myself in contrast to John the Baptist: Am I one who is there, who remains, or rather, do I withdraw, get tired, or become weak and allow my faith to die out? Do I stand there, or do I sit down, do I wait or I do not wait anymore?

- **“Fixing his look on Jesus”**

Here is a beautiful verb which signifies “to look intensely,” to penetrate with the look” and this is repeated in verse 42, referring to Jesus, who looks at Peter to change his life. Many times in the Gospels it is said that Jesus fixes His look on His disciples (Mt 19: 26), or on a particular person (Mk 10: 21). He fixes His look to love, to call, to enlighten. His look never leaves us. I know that I can find peace by exchanging this look. How can I pretend not to see? Why continue to turn my look from here to there, fleeing from the Lord’s love which has been given to me and has chosen me?

- **“They followed Jesus”**

This expression referred to the disciples. It does not only mean that they began to walk in the same direction with Christ, but much more: that they consecrated themselves to Him, that they committed their life with Him and for Him. He is the one who takes the initiative. He tells me: “You, follow Me,” like with the rich young man (Mt 19: 21) and with Peter (Jn 21: 22). How do I respond? Do I have the courage, the love, the ardor, to tell Him: “Master, I will follow You wherever You go!” (Mt 8: 19), confirming these words with the facts? Or do I also say, like the one in the Gospel: “I will follow You, but first allow me to. ” (Lk 9: 61)?

- **“What do you search?”**

The Lord Jesus pronounces the first words in John’s Gospel and they are a very concrete question, addressed to the disciples who are following Him and to me personally. The Lord fixes His look on me and asks me: “What are you searching for?” It is not easy to respond to this question. I must go deep into my heart and listen to myself. What am I really searching for? My energy, my desires, my dreams, my investments, to what purpose are they aimed?

- **“They remained with Him”**

The disciples remain with Jesus, they begin to live with Him, and to have the house in common with Him. Perhaps, they began to feel and experience that the Lord himself is their new house. The verb which John uses here can simply mean to dwell, to stay, but also to dwell in the intense sense of indwelling one in the other. Jesus indwells in the womb of the Father and also offers to us the possibility of indwelling in Him and in all the Trinity. Today, He offers himself here, to me, to live together this indescribable, splendid experience of love. Therefore, what do I decide? Do I also stop like the disciples and remain with Him and in Him? Or do I leave or withdraw from the love and run to seek something else?

- **“And leads them to Jesus”**

Andrew runs to call his brother Simon, because He wants to share with him the infinite gift which He has received. He announces and proclaims the Messiah, the savior, and has the strength to take his brother with him. He becomes a guide. This is a very important passage. I do not know if I am sufficiently open and enlightened to witness to Him, who reveals Himself to me so clearly. Perhaps I am afraid, I am embarrassed, I do not have the strength, I am lazy, or I am indifferent?

A Key for the Reading

- **The Lamb of God:**

In v. 36 John announces Jesus as the Lamb of God, repeating the cry which he had already given the day before: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

The identification of Jesus with the Lamb is overflowing with Biblical references, both from the Old and the New Testament.

The Lamb already is mentioned in the Book of Genesis, in chapter 22, at the moment of the sacrifice of Isaac; God provides a lamb, to be offered as holocaust instead of the son. The lamb descends from heaven and takes upon himself the death of man; the lamb is sacrificed so that the son may live.

In the Book of Exodus, in chapter 12, the Pascal Lamb is offered, a lamb without blemish, perfect; His blood, which will be poured, will save the sons from the exterminator, who goes from house to house, during the night. From that moment, every son of God will remain signed and sealed by that blood of salvation. The way is opened to freedom, the way of exodus, to go to God and to enter into the land promised by Him.

The element of sacrifice, of the slaughter, of the total gift, constantly accompanies the figure of the lamb. The books of Leviticus and Numbers continually place before us this holy presence of the lamb. He is offered every day in the daily holocaust. He is sacrificed in all the sacrifices of expiation, of reparation, of sanctification.

The Prophets also speak about a lamb prepared for the sacrifice: a mute sheep, sheared without opening its mouth, like a tame and meek lamb led to the slaughter (Is 53: 7; Jer 11: 19). The Lamb sacrificed on the altar every day.

In the Gospel, it is John the Baptist who announces and identifies Jesus as the true Lamb of God, who takes upon himself the sin of man and cancels it by the shedding of His precious and pure blood. In fact, He is the Lamb sacrificed in the place of Isaac. He is the Lamb roasted in the fire on the Pascal night. He is the perennial sacrifice to the Father, offered for us. He is the suffering servant, who does not rebel himself, does not recriminate, but surrenders himself silently out of love for us.

Saint Peter says this openly: “You have been liberated from the futile way of your life thanks to the precious blood of Christ, like the lamb, without blemish and spotless.” (1 Pt 1: 19).

The Apocalypse reveals openly all things concerning the Lamb. He is the one who can open the seals of history, of the life of every man, of the hidden heart, of truth (Ap 7: 1-12; 8: 1); He is the one who obtained victory, the one sitting on the throne (Rev 5, 6). He is the king, worthy of honor, praise, glory, adoration (Rev 5: 12). He is the spouse who invites us to His wedding banquet (Rev 19: 7). He is the lamp (Rev 23), the temple

(Rev 21-22), the place of our eternal dwelling. He is the Shepherd (Rev 7: 17) whom we shall follow wherever He goes (Rev 14: 4).

- **To See:**

Expressions concerning seeing are repeated five times. The first one is John, who already has the eye accustomed to see at a depth and recognize the Lord who passes by. He had to render witness to the light and for this reason has the eyes enlightened from within. In fact, near the Jordan River, he sees the Spirit coming down on Jesus (Mt 3:16); he recognizes Him as the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29) and continued to fix His look (v. 36) on Him to indicate Him to His disciples. If John sees in this way, if he is capable of penetrating beyond appearances, it means that he had already been joined by the loving look of Jesus. He had been enlightened before in the same way we are. In v. 38 it is said that Jesus sees the disciples who follow Him and the Evangelist uses a very beautiful verb, which means "to fix the look on someone, to look penetratingly and intensely." The Lord truly does this with us. He turns towards us, gets close to us, takes to heart our presence, our life, our path following Him, and looks at us, for a long time, above all, with love, intensely involving himself. His look never leaves us alone. His eyes are fixed within us. They are designed within us as Saint John of the Cross sings in his Spiritual Canticle.

And then the Lord invites us, in turn, to open the eyes, to begin to see in a true way. He says: "Come and see." Every day He repeats this to us without getting tired of addressing this tender and strong invitation, overflowing with promises and with gifts. "They saw where He was dwelling" John points out, using a different verb which indicates seeing profoundly, which goes beyond superficiality. It enters in understanding, knowledge, and in the faith of what one sees. The disciples – and we with them – saw that afternoon where Jesus dwelt. They understood and knew that His true dwelling place is not a place or a space.

Lastly, we have the same verb as in the beginning. Jesus fixes His look on Simon (v. 42) and with that light, with that encounter of eyes, of souls, He calls him by name and changes his life and makes him a new man. The eyes of the Lord are also open in this same way on us and they wash us from the ugliness of our darkness, enlightening us with love. With those eyes He is calling us, making a new creation of us. He is saying: "May there be light," and there was light.

- **To Remain – to Dwell**

This is another very important verb, very strong, and another precious pearl of the Gospel of John. It is repeated three times, with two different meanings: to dwell and to remain. The disciples immediately ask Jesus where He dwells, where is His house, and He invites them to go, to enter, and to remain: "They remained with Him that day" (v. 39). It is not a physical, temporary remaining. The disciples are not only guests passing by who will leave soon. No, the Lord makes space for us in His interior place, in His relationship with the Father, and there He accepts us for always. He says: "Like You Father, are in Me and I in You, may these also be in us... I in them and You in Me..." (Jn 17: 21-23). He allows us to enter and He also enters. He allows us to knock and He himself knocks. He makes us dwell in Him and puts His dwelling place in us together with the Father (Jn 14: 23). Our call to be disciples of Christ and to announce Him to our brothers and sisters has its origin, its foundation, its vitality, in this reality of the reciprocal dwelling of the Lord in us and we in Him. Our true and lasting happiness springs from the realization of our remaining in Him. We have seen where He dwells, we have known the place of His presence and we have decided to remain with Him, today and always.

"Remain in Me and I in You... The one who remains in Me and I in him bears much fruit ... If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask for anything that you want and it will be given to you... Remain in My love" (Jn 15).

No, I will not go with anybody else, I will not go anywhere else but only with You, Oh Lord, my dwelling, my place of salvation! Allow Me, I pray, that I may remain here, near You, always, Amen.

A Moment of Prayer: Psalm 34

Refrain: Your face, Lord, I seek, do not hide Your face from me.

I seek Yahweh and He answers me, frees me from all my fears.

Fix your gaze on Yahweh and your face will grow bright, you will never hang your head in shame.

A pauper calls out and Yahweh hears, saves him from all his troubles.

The angel of Yahweh encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them.

Taste and see that Yahweh is good.

How blessed are those who take refuge in Him. Fear Yahweh, you his holy ones;

those who fear Him lack for nothing. Young lions may go needy and hungry,

but those who seek Yahweh lack nothing good. Come, my children, listen to me,

I will teach you the fear of Yahweh.

The eyes of Yahweh are on the upright, his ear turned to their cry.

They cry in anguish and Yahweh hears, and rescues them from all their troubles.

Yahweh is near to the broken-hearted, he helps those whose spirit is crushed.

Though hardships without number beset the upright, Yahweh brings rescue from them all.

Final Prayer

Father, I thank You for having given me the presence of Your Son Jesus in the luminous words of this Gospel; thank You for having made me listen to His voice, for having opened my eyes to recognize Him; thank You for having placed me on the way to follow Him and to enter into His house, Thank You because I can dwell with Him, in Him and because He dwells in You, You are in me. Thank You for having, once more, called me, making my life new. Make of me, I beg You, an instrument of Your love; that I may never stop announcing Christ who comes; that I may not be embarrassed, that I do not close myself, do not give up, but always become happier, to lead to Him, to You, the brothers and sisters whom You, every day, make me encounter. Amen.

WORD OF THE WEEK

Justice *\ˈjə-stəs *

The moral fiber of a religious people that mirrors the God of Justice. More than an expression of fairness or the execution of legal judgment, biblical justice demands that we be straight, true, and righteous in our relationships with God and others.

🔊 Take Five Word of the Week: Justice <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-justice>

CONTEXT

Justice and revenge are not the same thing. As my father said, **justice** at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.

—Bernice King

Without **justice** and love, peace will always be a great illusion.

—Dom Hélder Câmara

It is impossible to struggle for civil rights, equal rights for blacks, without including whites. Because equal rights, fair play, **justice**, are like the air: we all have it, or none of us has it.

—Maya Angelou

WHY IT MATTERS

The theme of **justice** is central to scripture. Divine law defines it and the prophets clamor for it. Matthew describes Jesus' mission with Isaiah's proclamation: "I shall place my spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the [nations]." It is impossible to be the People of God and reject the way of God. To be unconcerned with the work of **justice** is to be indifferent to the divine will and the coming Kingdom.

From *Brothers and Sisters to Us* (USCCB Pastoral Letter on Racism, 1979): Racism and economic oppression are distinct but interrelated forces which dehumanize our society. Movement toward authentic **justice** demands a simultaneous attack on both evils.

RELATED WORDS

Racism | Eco-justice | Just War Theory

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What is meant by "just war"?

Just war theory is the body of moral reasoning developed to discern when the primary bias *against* war may shift toward an obligation to protect and defend. . . . In the Early Church, pacifism preceded just war tradition. The alliance of church with state under Constantine ensured that church policy leaned toward supporting the interests of the empire. Fourth-century theologians Ambrose and Augustine developed arguments that could, under limited conditions, make war not only permissible but obligatory in the service of a victimized neighbor.

Just war theory offers eight criteria for engagement. Seven determine whether a conflict is justified, including: just cause, competent authority, last resort, comparative justice, proportionality, right intention, and probability of success. The eighth consideration is reserved for an inevitable engagement and involves right conduct in wartime. In his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis argued that "it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a 'just war.' Never again war!" Clearly, it's never enough simply to declare a cause righteous in one's own mind and issue a call to arms.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <https://tinyurl.com/QCA-just-war>

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY (JANUARY 15)

A matter of head and heart

"One day we will learn that the heart can never be totally right if the head is totally wrong," the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote that in his book *Strength to Love* in 1963. He underscored the necessity of taking responsibility for the formation and lifelong education of our consciences: You have to be sure that your convictions are tied to more than your preferences, biases, and opinions!

READINGS: 1 Samuel 15:16-23; Mark 2:18-22 (311 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/011524.cfm>): *"No one pours new wine into old wineskins. ... Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins."*

FAITH IN ACTION

To be tethered to true north, reflect on scripture daily

REFLEXIÓN DE LA SEMANA

DÍA DE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (15 ENERO)

Ve por tu propio camino

Howard Thurman, el teólogo, activista, y mentor del Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., observó una vez: "No te preguntes qué es lo que necesita el mundo. Pregúntate qué te hace sentir vivo, y luego hazlo. Porque lo que el mundo necesita es más gente que se sienta viva." Eso puede parecer "egoísta": Cuando estás discerniendo cuál es la mejor manera de servir, ¿no deberías empezar con cualquiera de las muchas y grandes necesidades del mundo en vez de las propias? El mundo, no obstante, tiene suficientes problemas para resolver. Tu respuesta será la más efectiva cuando surja de lo que te anima profundamente..

LECTURAS: 1 Samuel 15:16-23; Marco 2:18-22 (311 <https://bible.usccb.org/es/bible/lecturas/011524.cfm>): *"Nadie echa vino nuevo en odres viejos. A vino nuevo, odres nuevos".*

FE EN ACCIÓN

No puede haber mejor testimonio a Jesús resucitado que seguir *su* camino a *tu* manera.

©2024 TrueQuest Communications. All rights reserved. Noncommercial reprints permitted with the following credit: *Reprinted with permission from TakeFiveForFaith.com*. Scripture citations from the New American Bible Revised Edition. Sign up to receive free weekly email at TakeFiveForFaith.com/subscribe. To receive Take Five Weekly in advance, subscribe to PreparetheWord.com.