

# 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 10, 2024

*Fourth Sunday of Lent*

### Opening Prayer

Shaddai, God of the mountain, You who make of our fragile life the rock of Your dwelling place, lead our mind to strike the rock of the desert, so that water may gush to quench our thirst. May our feelings, impoverished as they are, cover us as with a mantle in the darkness of the night, and may it open our hearts to hear the echo of silence until the dawn, wrapping us with the light of the new morning, bringing us, who have kept vigil us close to the divine Master, the flavor of the holy memory.

**, Gospel Text - John 3: 14-21**

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God."

#### **A Moment of Silence:**

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

## Meditatio

#### **Some Questions:**

- God has loved the world so much...: how many judgments and prejudices on what we think is an insensitive and far away God. Would this not be, perhaps, because we attribute to Him that which instead are our responsibilities?
- Light came into the world, but men have preferred darkness: whoever deludes himself by being only man and lives away from God cannot choose the light, because the illusion would vanish. How much darkness surrounds my days?
- Whoever does the truth comes out into the light. He is not afraid to show what he is. Man is not asked to be infallible, but simply to be man. Are we capable of living our weakness as a place of encounter and of openness to God as well as to others, who like myself, need to work faithfully in their space and in their time?

#### **Key to the Reading:**

- 3: 14-15. "As Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him." For the sons of Israel, who were bitten by the poisonous snakes in the desert, Moses offered the possibility of salvation by looking at the bronze serpent. If man succeeds in raising his head and looking on high, God prepares an alternative for him. He does not oblige but is there, available. The mystery of human liberty, of freedom, is the most lovable thing which God could invent! The choice of a look, of an encounter, of a new opportunity... the Son of Man in the desert of the world will be raised up on the cross as a sign of salvation for all those who will feel the need to continue living and will not allow themselves to be bitten by poisonous mistaken choices. Christ is there: cursed is he who has no faith, blessed is he who believes. We, like the Israelites in the desert, have been "bitten" by the serpent in Eden, and we need to look at the bronze serpent raised up on the staff of wood in order not to die: "Whoever believes in him has eternal life."
- 3: 16. For, in fact, God has loved the world so much, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have eternal life. God loves us with a preferential love, a tangible love, a love which speaks... Could the Father come directly? Yes, but is the love of a Father, who gives His only Son, not greater? Every mother, if she is able to choose, prefers to die herself rather than see her son die. God has loved us so much, to the point of seeing His Son die!

- 3: 17. God sent His Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through Him the world would be saved. A God capable of a perfect judgment sends the Son not to judge but to be a place of salvation. Truly, it is necessary to discard every thought and to place oneself before such a great love. Only the One who loves can “judge,” that is, “save.” He knows the fragility of the human heart and knows that His image, which has been darkened, has the possibility to be clear again. It is not necessary to make it anew.

The logic of life does not know death: God, who is life, cannot destroy what He himself has wanted to create. That, in some way, would be to destroy himself.

- 3: 18. No one who believes in Him will be judged; but whoever does not believe is judged already, because that person does not believe in the Name of God’s only Son. Faith is the discriminating element in every existence. Not to believe in the name of the Only Begotten Son: this is already a condemnation, because he who does not accept love excludes himself from love!
- 3: 19-20. And the judgment is this: though the light has come into the world, people have preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, to prevent his actions from being seen. The only judgment, by which humanity is invested, is the call to live in the light. When the sun rises, nothing can escape from its rays... and the same thing for men. When Christ is born, nobody can escape from this light which inundates everything. But men have constructed their houses to be able to flee from the light of the Love which sheds itself everywhere, houses of egotism, houses of opportunity. They have intertwined tunnels and hiding places to continue freely to carry out their deeds. And can a work deprived of light bear fruit? The light of existence has only one source: God. He who withdraws from the light dies.
- 3: 21. But whoever does the truth comes out into the light, so that what he is doing may plainly appear as done in God. Everything which is under the rays of eternal love is filled with light as it happens in nature. It seems that everything smiles when the sun shines. The things which during the day are familiar and beautiful, at night, take a form which inspires fear by the fact that they are not visible. The sun does not change its form, but it exalts it in its beauty. Whoever lives the truth of himself and accepts his fragility as an ornament of his being a man is not afraid of light because he has nothing to hide. He knows that as a creature he acts in the logic of limitation, but this does not diminish the greatness of his work because his life is one with eternal truth.

### **Reflection:**

The garden becomes a desert for the man who draws himself away from God. And in the desert of his limitations as man he once again finds the poisonous bites of the serpent. But God does not abandon His children, and when they withdraw from Him, he follows them, ready to intervene when necessary. A serpent, the symbol of healing, is raised every time that the poison weakens the life in man, Christ the Lord. If man prefers to look down to the ground and to remain in the desert of “I do it myself,” God, just the same, offers Himself: as a serpent, as the only way in which man can recognize Him. Christ has made Himself sin, damned, in order to save His image, in order not to let human life die out. Condemnation does not belong to God; it is man’s choice. I am completely free. God’s freedom has a price of condemnation. Only people who are not intelligent enough do not profit from a gift which is given to them. It is simply foolish not to

accept what is best so as not to feel as debtors. In the sphere of love the word "debt" does not exist, because gratuitousness is the only term that can be consulted. With the word, gratuitousness light explodes: everything becomes possible, everything becomes an occasion. Works done in darkness or works done in God. It is better to go frequently to halls filled by the sunshine of a never finished apprenticeship! At least there life grows and joy fills all things with beauty.

## Oratio

### Psalm 35

Sin is the oracle of the wicked in the depths of his heart;  
there is no fear of God before his eyes. He sees himself with too flattering an eye to detect and detest his guilt;  
all he says is malicious and deceitful; he has turned his back on wisdom.  
To get his way  
he hatches malicious plots even in his bed; once set on his evil course  
no wickedness is too much for him.  
Yahweh, Your faithful love is in the heavens, Your constancy reaches to the clouds,  
Your saving justice is like towering mountains, Your judgments like the mighty deep.  
Yahweh, You support both man and beast; how precious, God, is Your faithful love.  
So the children of Adam  
take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.  
They feast on the bounty of Your house,  
You let them drink from Your delicious streams; in You is the source of life,  
by Your light we see the light.  
Maintain Your faithful love  
to those who acknowledge You  
and Your saving justice to the honest of heart.  
Do not let the foot of the arrogant overtake me or wicked hands drive me away.  
There they have fallen, the evil-doers, flung down, never to rise again.

## Contemplatio

When holy fear abandons me, Oh Lord, I feel sin which speaks in my heart: these are moments of illusion, moments in which I go to look for my failures. I experience the sense of guilt without end, and all this is useless because I have not understood that it is only in doing good, that the iniquitous and misleading words of evil are extinguished. To be obstinate to evil is an attraction, almost as if this would give me more importance and honor, more value. When I become aware that what you give me and allow me to live is immense, then I perceive the great abyss of Your fidelity, and I see how Your salvation does not know any limits. Everything inundates and takes me with it, me who are in Your image and all that You have created for me and to which I have given a name. Truly, Your grace is precious. In Your house the abundance of protection is in

force, and pleasure and delight flow like water. If I look through Your eyes, Lord, then everything is light. And nothing is now difficult, because my heart, purified from temptation of being God in Your place, tells me that I will be God with You. Rivalry, competition, hostility... vanish in the face of Your offer to participate in Your divine life. God with you. You, the source of the image and I a reflection of that image! Your love as sap runs through the heart, through the depth of my humanity until I find my origin: in your Name.



Invest time each week to  
expand your vocabulary and  
deepen your faith.

10 March 2024

## WORD OF THE WEEK

### Joy \ˈjɔɪ\

A fruit or mark of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the faithful. While pleasure comes through the senses and happiness from human interaction, Christian **joy** is experienced in loving God and neighbor.

**Pronunciation:** <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-joy>

### CONTEXT

**Joy** is a net of love by which we catch souls.  
—Saint Teresa of Calcutta

**Joy**, with peace, is the sister of charity. Serve the Lord with laughter.  
—Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

The gospel is a proclamation of **joy**. Ideologies don't make people smile, but the gospel is a smile. It makes you smile because it touches your soul with the Good News.  
—Pope Francis

### WHY IT MATTERS

Venerable Fulton J. Sheen once divided the world into those who have found God and those who are still hungering, thirsting, and seeking. Religious practices in themselves may or may not bring a person to genuine holiness. But the life that exhibits true **joy** proves to be radiant with the life of God.

From *Gaudium et spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: "The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the longings of history and of civilization, the center of the human race, the **joy** of every heart and the answer to all its yearnings."

### RELATED WORDS

Rejoice | Alleluia | Fruits of the Spirit

## QUESTION OF THE WEEK

### Will my faith make me happy?

The biblical idea of happiness is linked to *beatitude* (Latin for "bliss"). Jesus offers beatitudes in his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel. Often the primary word of each beatitude is translated as *blessed*. A more literal rendering might be the cry, "Happy you!" who are just, pure of heart, merciful, a peacemaker, and so on. God is the source of happiness, therefore doing as God does brings bliss.

So, the short answer to the question is, yes, living according to God's will makes you happy. It's the only thing, in fact, that does; or as Saint Thomas Aquinas declared, "God alone satisfies." Saint Paul lists **joy** as one of nine fruits of the Holy Spirit. Saint Francis de Sales went so far as to warn against giving in to excessive sadness as it's a counter-witness to the **joy** that comes in the life of faith.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-happy>

## REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT, LAETARE SUNDAY (MARCH 10)

### Rejoice and be glad

Most of us aren't crazy about being told to "cheer up." Yet today is called Laetare ("rejoice") Sunday because even though it's Lent, the church urges us to cheer up in the words of Isaiah 66:10: "Rejoice with Jerusalem all you who love her." We may feel affection for the memory of biblical Jerusalem or concern for the current sorrows of the city. But it's the heavenly city, where justice and peace reign, that gives us reason to rejoice.

READINGS: 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23; Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:14-21 (32 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/031024-YearB.cfm>). "Whoever lives the truth comes to the light."

### FAITH IN ACTION

Remember our **joy** and hope lies in the land where Christ rules.