



Archdiocese of St. Louis
Office of Sacred Worship
Lectio Divina
Monday of the Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time Year II

Lectio Divina

Read the following passage four times.

- The first reading, simply read the scripture and pause for a minute.
Listen to the passage with the ear of the heart. Don't get distracted by intellectual types of questions about the passage. Just listen to what the passage is saying to you, right now.
- The second reading, look for a key word or phrase that draws your attention.
Notice if any phrase, sentence or word stands out and gently begin to repeat it to yourself, allowing it to touch you deeply. No elaboration. In a group setting, you can share that word/phrase or simply pass.
- The third reading, pause for 2-3 minutes reflecting on "*Where does the content of this reading touch my life today?*"
Notice what thoughts, feelings, and reflections arise within you. Let the words resound in your heart. What might God be asking of you through the scripture? In a group setting, you can share your reflection or simply pass.
- The fourth reading, pause for 2-3 minutes reflecting on "*I believe that God wants me to today/this week.*"
Notice any prayerful response that arises within you, for example a small prayer of gratitude or praise. In a group setting, you can share your reflection or simply pass.

Reading

Mi 6:1-4, 6-8

Hear what the LORD says: Arise, present your plea before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice! Hear, O mountains, the plea of the LORD, pay attention, O foundations of the earth! For the LORD has a plea against his people, and he enters into trial with Israel.

O my people, what have I done to you, or how have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, from the place of slavery I released you; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow before God most high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with myriad streams of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my crime, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: Only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.

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Responsorial Psalm

Ps 50:5-6, 8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23

R. (23b) To the upright I will show the saving power of God.

"Gather my faithful ones before me, those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." And the heavens proclaim his justice; for God himself is the judge.

R. To the upright I will show the saving power of God.

"Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you, for your burnt offerings are before me always. I take from your house no bullock, no goats out of your fold."

R. To the upright I will show the saving power of God.

"Why do you recite my statutes, and profess my covenant with your mouth, though you hate discipline and cast my words behind you?"

R. To the upright I will show the saving power of God.

"When you do these things, shall I be deaf to it? Or do you think that I am like yourself? I will correct you by drawing them up before your eyes. He that offers praise as a sacrifice glorifies me; and to him that goes the right way I will show the salvation of God."

R. To the upright I will show the saving power of God.

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Alleluia

Ps 95:8

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Mt 12:38-42

Some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." He said to them in reply, "An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. At the judgment, the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and there is something greater than Jonah here. At the judgment the queen of the south will arise with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the Wisdom of Solomon; and there is something greater than Solomon here."



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LECTIONARY

1) Exodus 14:5-18

When Pharaoh pursued Israel, they complained that it would be better to be slaves in Egypt than corpses in the desert. God will reveal his glory through Pharaoh and his chariots.

2) Mi 6:1-4, 6-8

God pleads with his people and then inspires the famous prophetic Torah of walking humbly with your God.

3) Matthew 12:38-42

When people asked for signs, Jesus replied that the Ninevites and the queen of the south responded more readily to Jonah and Solomon than this generation to himself.

Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P. Biblical Meditations for Ordinary Time

How few of us are willing to take risk for God-and how seldom! We are like the Israelites, delivered from slavery and yet fearful that God has gone to all this trouble only to kill us in the desert of our troubles.

We must remember how long and how carefully God had been preparing for this moment of the exodus: the training of Moses and his call; the plagues in Egypt; Moses' encounters with Pharaoh. It seems that unless Israel could see immediate solutions, so that really no risk was taken at all, the people immediately complained. Their words at this time explain the cause of their vacillation and fear. They said to Moses:

Were there no burial places in Egypt that you had to bring us here to die in the desert? . . . Far better for us to be the slaves of the Egyptians than to die in the desert.

Unless a people has principles that will never tolerate slavery under any form, for themselves or for others, they will never take the risks of faith.

All of us instinctively feel that risks are an essential ingredient in greatness and in normal happiness. Unless spouses and families take risks "for better or for worse, till death do us part," they will possess very little faith, and sooner or later they will fail in fidelity to one another. During crucial times in all our lives, we call upon a faith that God cannot stand by when his people are mistreated. Yet faith remains faith, and hope remains hope. That can mean the delay of fulfillment and the continuation of the risk.

God too has exceptional faith in his people Israel and has taken great risks in choosing them for his very own. For this reason, he pleads with them through the prophet Micah:

O my people, what have I done to you, or how have I wearied you? Answer me!
For I brought you up from the land of Egypt. . .

These lines have inspired the poignant "Improperium" or "Reproaches" of the Good Friday liturgy. After the unveiling of the cross, the choir sings:

My people, what have I done to you?
How have I offended you? Answer me!
For forty years I led you safely through the desert.
I fed you with manna from heaven, . . .
But you led your savior of the cross and gave me vinegar to drink.

Micah, who has inspired these touching and disturbing "reproaches," also advises us on the answer. Negatively he states what God does not want: not many holocausts, nor thousands of rams with myriad streams of oil. We are not to offer up all the work of our body, even our first-born; none of these external achievements can take the place of interior attitudes and so compensate for the sin of the soul. Micah then wrote the well-known lines:

You have been told, O man and woman, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you:
Only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.



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Perhaps no one takes more chances and shows more faith than the humble person who does not push nor shove but inspires and hopes.

With this background in the memory and soul of Jesus, how disappointed he was when some religious leaders spoke up and demanded “to see you work some signs.” Jesus had already worked many miracles, but evidently for the wrong persons in the eyes of these leaders. Jesus had shown extraordinary fidelity to a ministry of kindness and concern, but these people wanted something other than the cure of a poor cripple or the blessed wisdom of being poor in spirit or pure of heart. Jesus then reasons with their memories. Their traditions told of Jonah and of Solomon, of the conversion of many Ninevites and of the amazement of the queen of the South at the Wisdom of Solomon. These foreign people, even the most hated of them all, the Ninevites, repented and were converted- “and you have a greater than Solomon here.”

Many of us are too selective in our miracles from God. Unless we take the risk of being generous towards others, no miracle will prove anything to us. Jesus, moreover, gives the memorial sign of Jonah, who was “three days and three nights in the belly of the whale.” We too must risk going the depths and letting ourselves be swallowed by God’s will and taken in God’s unknown direction, as happened to Jonah. Then we will experience the sweet happiness of faith’s reward, the delight at the end of long fidelity.

Prayer:

We will sing to the Lord, for God is gloriously triumphant in our life. Your way for us, Lord, led through a sea of darkness and questioning. Yet, now we thank you for inspiring us to take the risk and follow your summons. In this right way we have experienced the salvation of our God.

*** 2010 ***

FOCUS: God shows us the way we are to live.

God does not keep secret the path for us to take. From ancient times, God spoke through the prophets to guide his people in right living. God sent his Son, and the way became even clearer. Jesus left us the Church and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help us do what is right, to love generously, and to walk humbly with God.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Micah, points out that, although God has freed his people and given them the guidance of the prophets, still they ignore God’s basic message-do right, love goodness, and walk humbly with him. In the Gospel, the scribes and Pharisees want a sign from Jesus. He reminds them of the signs of Jonah and Solomon. Jesus is greater than either of these.

*** 2011 ***

FOCUS: We are to be signs of God’s love in the world.

Throughout history, people have sought reassurance from God by way of signs, and God often provided strong, plainly seen signals of his love and power. The greatest sign of His love, of course, was sending his Son to save us. We, in turn, can be signs of God’s love as we serve others in his name.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The reading from Exodus tells us of God’s promise to destroy Pharaoh’s soldiers, showing both the Israelites and their enemies God’s glory and power. In the Gospel, Jesus refuses to provide another sign to the scribes and Pharisees. He says the only sign they will receive is the sign of Jonah, when He will rise from the dead.

*** 2012 ***

FOCUS: We are called to do what is right, love goodness and walk humbly with God.

Today’s reading from the prophet Micah offers us a powerful and poignant summary of what it means to live as faithful servants of the Lord. We are to recognize that God has revealed to us what it means to walk in the way of righteousness. Understanding this, we are to do what is right, love goodness, and walk humbly with God.

LITURGY OF THE WORD



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In today's Gospel, Jesus strongly judges the peoples' need for yet another sign, another visible miracle testifying to his power. He points to their lack of faith as being evil, and refuses to perform, reminding them that the men of Nineveh had faith, and that there is already someone greater than Jonah here—namely, him.

*** 2013 ***

FOCUS: Mary Magdalene serves as a model for the new evangelization.

Devoted to Jesus, Mary Magdalene was with him during his ministry and at his death. She was the first to encounter the Risen Lord at the tomb. After enjoying His presence alone, she carried out the mission to tell the Good News. Like Mary Magdalene, we can come to know Jesus personally. Then we, too, must tell others about Him.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading Pharaoh changes, his mind and goes in pursuit of the Israelites. In the Gospel, Mary Magdalene discovers an empty tomb where Jesus had been buried. When she asks where they took the body, Mary recognizes the Risen Lord when he calls her by name.

*** 2014 ***

FOCUS: The Resurrection of Jesus is the greatest truth of our faith.

We should prayerfully reflect upon the Sing of Jonah, not only as a prophetic sign of the Resurrection of Jesus, but also as the hope and promise of resurrection for his faithful disciples.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, the prophet Micah presents a three-fold message: justice, love and humility. In today's Gospel, Jesus rebuffs the close-mindedness of the Pharisees who seek a sign from him.

*** 2015 ***

FOCUS: Have faith in God, even in your darkest hour.

The Israelites willingly follow God when he frees them from slavery, but at the first sign of danger, their hope is shaken and they become fearful. Because of their lack of trust in God, they seem ready to abandon him. How faithful are we in our commitment to follow the Lord? Do we continue to believe and trust in him in bad times, or only when things are going well?

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, the Israelites panic when they are pursued by Pharaoh, but Moses orders them to keep still. He assures them that the Lord will protect them. In the Gospel, the Pharisees and scribes refuse to believe in Jesus unless he shows them a sign. Jesus states that no sign will be given to them except the sign of Jonah.

HOMILY

FOCUS: Keep still and trust in God's love for you.

What do you do when trouble strikes? When your best-laid plans fall apart and you can see disaster on the horizon? Do you fall into despair? Wear yourself out with worrying? Or do you go to the other extreme? Do you work out a new plan? Take action? Do something?

God freed the Israelites from oppression and slavery. They rejoiced when they left Egypt to follow Moses to the Promised Land, but when they turned to see Pharaoh and his army in hot pursuit, their joy turned to fear. Faced with danger, their first thought was to reject the freedom they had been given, saying, what have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? – and their first reaction was fear. They had been freed by the awesome power of God, but not one of them even thought to turn to God for help. Surely, they expected Moses, as their leader, to come up with some clever plan or at least to take up a defensive position to withstand the impending military assault. Instead, he rebukes them for their panic: Do not fear! Stand your ground ... The Lord will fight for you; you have only to keep still!

Keep still? Who can keep still in the face of anxiety, distress, and fear? Being still requires trust. It requires letting go and giving up control of our lives to God. But why do we find it so hard to trust God? Maybe we are afraid that he will not do what



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we want. A friend once said that the Lord's Prayer frightens her because of the words "thy will be done." She finds it hard to let go and give up control to God. Truthfully, she would prefer that "her will be done."

We are surrounded by messages that are contrary to God's call to trust in him. Media messages admonish us to take control of our own destiny, to set goals and be self-confident in meeting them. We are told that we have everything we need inside of us, and only need to rely on ourselves. In our secular world, it is blasphemy to even think about giving control of our lives to someone else – even to God.

The key to trusting in God is love. If we truly understood and believed in how deeply God loves us, we would find it easy to trust in him. How could he do anything other than what is best for us? Pray for God to deepen your awareness of his love for you. Your ability to trust him will come more easily and you can keep still and allow the Lord himself to fight for you.

*** 2016 ***

FOCUS: In order to be God's servants, we must *do justice and love goodness*.

Today's reading from the prophet Micah reminds us of some essential things we must do to live as faithful servants of God. We must love goodness, do what is right and walk humbly with our God. Doing what is right – what is good – means acting with justice and mercy toward others. We must conform ourselves to the will of God and work to please him in all that we do.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading from Micah, we learn that God does not want burnt offerings or sacrifices, but he wants us to act justly and humbly in communion with him. In the Gospel, the Pharisees demand a sign, but Jesus says that no sign will be given them except the sign of Jonah.

*** 2017 ***

FOCUS: God gives us signs of his love if we have eyes to see his love and care all around us.

The scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign, despite the fact that he had already performed many signs before them. We know that Jesus is sign enough, and all we must do is listen to his message of salvation, and have eyes to see his loving and caring presence in our lives.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading tells of how the Pharaoh, upon regretting his decision to release the Israelites from his service, muster his army to go and bring the Israelites back. In the Gospel, the scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign. Jesus responds to their request by saying, *An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet.*

*** 2018 ***

FOCUS: Love goodness and walk humbly with your God.

We sometimes forget that God is very forgiving, and think we must go to extremes in asking for pardon. What the Lord wants is our humility, love and true repentance.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading Micah, the prophet, assures his listeners that the best repentance is *to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God*. In the Gospel, Jesus scolds some Pharisees who demanded signs to prove his claims of divinity. He told them that he was greater than Jonah, who preached repentance, and wiser than Solomon, who taught the queen of the south.