



Archdiocese of St. Louis
Office of Sacred Worship
Lectio Divina
The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Cycle C
Lectionary: 169

* * *

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.

First Reading

Genesis 14:18-20

In those days, Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram with these words: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

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Responsorial Psalm

Ps 110:1, 2, 3, 4

R. (4b) *You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.*

The LORD said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool."

R. *You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.*

The scepter of your power the LORD will stretch forth from Zion: "Rule in the midst of your enemies."

R. *You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.*

"Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in holy splendor; before the daystar, like the dew, I have begotten you."

R. *You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.*

The LORD has sworn, and he will not repent: "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

R. *You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.*

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Second Reading

1 Corinthians 11:23-36

Brothers and sisters: I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood."



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Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Sequence - Lauda Sion

Laud, O Zion, your salvation, Laud with hymns of exultation, Christ, your king and shepherd true:
Bring him all the praise you know, He is more than you bestow. Never can you reach his due.
Special theme for glad thanksgiving Is the quick'ning and the living Bread today before you set:
From his hands of old partaken, as we know, by faith unshaken, Where the Twelve at supper met.
Full and clear ring out your chanting, Joy nor sweetest grace be wanting, from your heart let praises burst:
For today the feast is holden, When the institution olden of that supper was rehearsed.
Here the new law's new oblation, By the new king's revelation, Ends the form of ancient rite:
Now the new the old effaces, Truth away the shadow chases, Light dispels the gloom of night.
What he did at supper seated, Christ ordained to be repeated, His memorial ne'er to cease:
And his rule for guidance taking, Bread and wine we hallow, making Thus our sacrifice of peace.
This the truth each Christian learns, Bread into his flesh he turns, To his precious blood the wine:
Sight has fail'd, nor thought conceives, but a dauntless faith believes, Resting on a pow'r divine.
Here beneath these signs are hidden Priceless things to sense forbidden; Signs, not things are all we see:
Blood is poured and flesh is broken, yet in either wondrous token Christ entire we know to be.
Whoso of this food partakes, does not rend the Lord nor breaks; Christ is whole to all that taste:
Thousands are, as one, receivers, One, as thousands of believers, eats of him who cannot waste.
Bad and good the feast are sharing, of what divers dooms preparing, Endless death, or endless life.
Life to these, to those damnation, see how like participation Is with unlike issues rife.
When the sacrament is broken, doubt not, but believe 'tis spoken, that each sever'd outward token doth
the very whole contain.
Nought the precious gift divides, breaking but the sign betides Jesus still the same abides, still unbroken
does remain.

The shorter form of the sequence begins here

Lo! the angel's food is given To the pilgrim who has striven; see the children's bread from heaven, which
on dogs may not be spent.
Truth the ancient types fulfilling, Isaac bound, a victim willing, Paschal lamb, its lifeblood spilling,
manna to the fathers sent.
Very bread, good shepherd, tend us, Jesu, of your love befriend us, you refresh us, you defend us, your
eternal goodness send us in the land of life to see.
You who all things can and know, who on earth such food bestow, grant us with your saints, though
lowest, Where the heav'nly feast you show, Fellow heirs and guests to be. Amen. Alleluia.

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Alleluia

Jn 6:51

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the living bread come down from heaven, says the Lord; whoever eats this bread will live forever.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Lk 9:11b-17

Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed to be cured. As the day was drawing to a close, the Twelve approached him and said, "Dismiss the crowd so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms and find lodging and provisions; for we are in a deserted place here." He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves." They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people." Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Then he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty." They did so and made them all sit down. Then taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets.

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First Reading

Genesis 14:18-20

Melchizedek brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram.

To encourage his late Jewish readers to hold their heads high among their pagan neighbors, the author of Genesis recalls how an ancient priest-king saluted their ancestor Abram, whom we know as Abraham.

The Abram in this reading is, of course, the man we are soon to know as the patriarch Abraham, founder of the people who became our ancestors in the faith. This story is from very early in Abraham's saga. He has just defeated some local "kings" and recovered from them captive kinsfolk and property.

While Melchizedek (pronunciation) may have been a "priest of God Most High," remember that God was only beginning to reveal himself to Abraham in the special ways that would become the kernel of our tradition. So though the bread and wine mentioned are highly suggestive for us at this late date, it would be a mistake to read into this story more than the participants meant by their gestures.

It is striking that the letter to the Hebrews, which elaborates on Melchizedek as a type of Christ's high priesthood, never mentions the gifts—the bread and wine—that he presented to Abraham.

This is all the more surprising since these gifts were allegorically interpreted by Philo, by the rabbis, and by the Church Fathers from Cyprian onwards as a type of the Eucharist, especially in its sacrificial character.

The sacrifice made once for all becomes a present reality in the Eucharist through the consecration and sharing of the bread and wine, and, because of the presence of the sacrifice, communicates its fruits.

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways does Melchizedek prefigure Jesus?
2. Discuss the properties of bread and wine and their benefits to the body when consumed. Why do you think Melchizedek chose them for offerings? Why do you think Jesus chose them?

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 110:1, 2, 3, 4

This is one of the royal psalms. Its date and original reference are in dispute.

There is a trend to interpret it as a reference to the early kings of Judah in the Davidic line, though earlier critics regarded it as an attempt of the priestly family of the Hasmoneans to justify their claim to kingship as well as to priesthood.

In either case, Melchizedek is taken as the prototype of the priest-king.

The author of Hebrews takes up this psalm because it enables him to develop his own teaching on Christ's high priesthood.

In the earlier Church, the messiahship (kingship) of Jesus was firmly established. Now Hebrews develops the further Christology (implicit in the early Church's sacrificial interpretation of Jesus' death) that he is also priest.

The psalm may remind us that in the Eucharist Christ is himself the true priest who presides over his

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Eucharistic banquet and gives himself as the sacrificial victim to the faithful. He “gives himself with his own hand” (St. Thomas Aquinas).

The ministerial priest who presides at the earthly altar is the instrument by which Christ's true high priesthood is externalized.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 11:23-36

Paul hands down a tradition in which Jesus says over the bread, “This is my body: and over the cup, “the covenant in my blood.” In this way the community proclaims the death of the Lord.

Paul the Apostle needed to correct several abuses among the Christians at Corinth, including discourtesies at their celebrations of the Lord's Supper. Here he makes a rare invocation of tradition that he received from even earlier Christians. He connects the Lord's Supper with the whole mystery of Christ.

This is one of the few places in his writings where Paul solemnly states that he is handing on a tradition older than his own vocation as a Christian. The words he quotes are very similar to those ascribed to Jesus in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Surprisingly, Paul quotes Jesus almost nowhere else.

Paul has to be very clear about his authority here because he's correcting the Corinthians severely. Misconduct at the Eucharist was one of several abuses for which the Apostle takes them to task.

To proclaim the death of the Lord is to confess one's faith in the whole mystery of Christ and all that he means for us.

This passage was the second reading for the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday (q.v.), suggesting that the feast of Corpus Christi is an extrapolation of the earlier occasion.

On Holy Thursday we contemplate the institution of the Eucharist in its relation to the whole series of events of the sacred triduum.

On Corpus Christi the Eucharist is isolated for contemplation as an ongoing rite in the Church.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do we believe Jesus meant when he said, “Do this in remembrance of me”? To what does “this” refer? Could it mean more than one thing?
2. When Jesus said, “Do this,” do you think he meant for us to eat his body and drink his blood and remember that he died for us? Or that we should remember that he died for us, eat his body, drink his blood and lay down our lives for each other as he did?
3. Explain “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes” in the light of the breaking of the bread.

Alleluia

Jn 6:51

Gospel

Lk 9:11b-17

Taking the five loaves and the two fishes. Jesus raised his eyes to heaven, pronounced a blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to his disciples for distribution to the crowd.

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An unlikely wilderness setting, an unusually large crowd, an unprecedented mix of men, women and children in public, all make this familiar miracle story even more remarkable.

Many motifs have shaped the narratives of the feeding of the multitude. On the historical level there can be little doubt that the meeting of Jesus and his followers in the desert marked the critical turning point in the Galilean ministry.

There is no reason why this critical meeting should not have been accompanied by a meal, which, like all Jesus' meals with his disciples, would have eschatological associations as a foretaste of the eschatological banquet.

In earliest Christianity Jesus was interpreted as the prophet of the end time, repeating Moses' gift of the manna (a theme that comes out most strongly in the Johannine discourse following this episode) and the miraculous multiplication of loaves by Elisha (2 Kgs 4:42-44).

Further, the language of the Eucharistic liturgy has colored the narrative: “sit down . . . taking . . . loaves . . . blessed . . . broke . . . gave . . . ate.”

We generally think of the Last Supper as the institution of the Eucharist. But the New Testament sees two further bases for the rite: the meals of the earthly Jesus with his followers and the appearance meals after the resurrection. These meals emphasize an aspect that was certainly present in the Last Supper (Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16-18), namely, its eschatological character.

The Eucharist is not only a feeding upon a past sacrifice made a present reality, but also a foretaste of the messianic banquet.

Grant us with your saints, though lowest, Where the heavenly feast you show
Fellow heirs and guests to be.

Discussion Questions:

1. The crowd had been listening all day, spellbound by Jesus' words in a deserted area, away from villages. How would the disciples have taken care of so many hungry people? How did Jesus?
2. According to what Pope Francis says below, what is it that matters: the extent of our gift, or our sharing of it? If the latter, what happens to our gifts when we share them?

In the face of the crowd's needs, this is the disciples' solution: Everyone takes care of himself; dismiss the crowd. Many times we Christians have that same temptation; we don't take on the needs of others, but dismiss them with a compassionate “May God help you” or a not-so-compassionate “Good luck.” ...

What Jesus encouraged the disciples to do was an act of “solidarity,” ... placing at God's disposal what little we have, our humble abilities, because only in sharing and in giving will our lives be fruitful. ...

At the same time, in receiving the Eucharist faithfully the Lord leads us to follow his path—that of service, sharing and giving; and that little that we have, the little that we are, if shared, becomes a treasure because the power of God, who is love, descends to our poverty and transforms it.

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Pope Francis: Our Lives Don't Belong to Us

3. Which would be the more impressive today, an actual multiplication of loaves and fish or thousands of people sharing their food with each other? Do you try to share?
4. The reading says, “They ate and were satisfied.” Who would you encounter in a person if they were Eucharist to you? Would you be satisfied?

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Today's readings for the feast of Corpus Christi or of the Body of Christ begin with one of the rare biblical allusions to Melchizedek. In the Hebrew Scriptures this mysterious person enters the text only here in Genesis, chapter 14, and in an equally difficult text, Psalm 110. In the New Testament Melchizedek is mentioned ten times, but the references are entirely within chapters 5 to 6 of the Epistle to the Hebrews, nowhere else! Melchizedek, moreover, is mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran. Here he ushers in the final age of the world, the fulfillment of all promises, the victory of God's people.

On this feast of Corpus Christi, we find that Melchizedek signals something extraordinary and unique, the victory of God's people, the beginning of the kingdom of God. The rabbis even discuss the unknown parentage of Melchizedek; the names of his father and mother are not given. According to a rabbinical maxim, whatever cannot be found in the Torah (the first five books of Moses) cannot be said to exist. They, therefore, conclude to Melchizedek's mysterious, even heavenly origin. The Epistle to the Hebrews will apply this idea to Jesus our High Priest:

Without father, mother or ancestry, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever (Heb 7:3).

The first reading compounds the problem still more! Melchizedek, though not a Hebrew more a member of the Levitical tribe, much less of the high priestly family of Aaron and Zadok, nonetheless offers sacrifice to God Most High and blesses Abram. (The name has not yet been changed to Abraham-chap. 17.) a pagan priest blesses Abram and recognizes God's redemptive action Abram's favor.

This long, somewhat difficult background to the Eucharist shows us a priesthood, different from Israel's and reaching out to the world. Abram worshiped "the creator of heaven and earth." The Hebrew scripture was leading the people Israel to a moment when Melchizedek would reappear and reunite Israel with the world, as happened momentarily with Abram. The Eucharist too should provide the nourishment and strength of ourselves to reach outward to every brother and sister and still further to strangers. The charity of the Eucharist should have no limits in what it inspires within us.

The Eucharist, moreover, will prepare us for surprising turns in our life, suddenly we will be expected to receive outsiders into our family, people who bring a new sense of "the heaven and the earth," their beauty and their challenge.

While the first reading from Genesis urges us to reach outward and to face up to differences, the second reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians reminds us of the cost in suffering:

Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Just as Jesus' attempt to unite the poor and the outcasts with the secure and well established led to friction, opposition and finally his death, our own endeavors to reach outward and to recognize goodness in strangers will not be easy at all. The Eucharist provides the nourishment for this heroic outreach of charity; the Eucharist also symbolizes the unity and its cost in suffering. The Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist is the Body broken on the cross and the Blood shed from the wounds of the crucified Jesus.

We have long journey to go before we reach the ideal of unity in the Eucharist-before Melchizedek appears again to usher us into the messianic kingdom. We understandably become tired, even in danger of collapsing along the way. Here we find ourselves among the crowd which followed Jesus into an out-of-

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the-way place. Even though we, like the crowd, have already been healed of ailments, according to the opening words of today's gospel, still we find it very difficult to continue.

When Mark records Jesus' action of multiplying the five loaves and the two fishes, the evangelist uses the language of the Eucharist, repeated today in each celebration of mass. Jesus, we are told:

took the bread	broke the loaves
raised his eyes to heaven	gave them to his disciples
pronounced a blessing	for distribution

We can raise the question: does the statement that the leftover fragments filled twelve baskets in some way allude to the presence of Jesus within the church, the new twelve tribes of the people of God, or even to the preservation of the Eucharist in our tabernacles for the sick and for those unable to attend the regular Eucharistic ceremony?

The principal symbolism, however, is that of a journey. The Eucharist is intended to nourish and strengthen us for continuing faithfully in our way of life. It provides charity and renewed faith to move onward as a single community; individuals cannot survive in the wilderness. It enables us to be ready when Melchizedek ushers us into the messianic kingdom.

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Lectio Divina: 169 Year C – Lectio Divina

Lectio divina is a reflective reading of Scripture leading to meditation on specific passages. This is a centuries-old practice of prayer, which relies on the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the heart as the person praying reads a Scripture passage and pauses to seek out the deeper meaning that God wants to convey through his Word. “It is especially necessary that listening to the word of God should become a life-giving encounter in the ancient and ever valid tradition of lectio divina, which draws from the biblical text the living word, which questions, directs, and shapes our lives” (NMI, no. 39).

Lectio Divina literally means “Divine Reading,” and it refers to the way that monks have been ruminating on Scripture for centuries. There are five basic steps, in which we answer four questions, and then resolve to act upon those answers.

Lectio (Reading)

In the first phase of lectio divina, we understand what the passage we are reading says in itself. This is the literal meaning of the Scripture passage and the lessons everyone should recognize in reading it. At this stage, we do not yet consider our own lives in connection with the Scriptures. We do not let our opinions influence our reading, but seek to understand the message of the passage as interpreted by the Church independently of anyone’s opinions. This phase is summarized with the question: What does the text say that everyone should understand?

Meditatio (Meditation)

In the meditation phase of lectio divina, we ask, what does this text say to me, today, and to my life? We allow God to pull up certain memories of people, places, and events in our lives that relate to the passage we are reading. Meditation is also an opportunity to see ourselves in the text. We can consider our own feelings as if we were a participant in the text or try to understand what it would be like to be one of the people represented in the text. In this way, we come to a deeper appreciation of how God is working in our lives through the sacred word. Having entered into the story ourselves, we can return to the present and consider the areas in our own lives that God is calling us to contemplate.

Oratio (Prayer)

Through a meditation on Scripture, we experience an intimate encounter with God that leads us to respond in prayer. Having met our Lord in his holy word, we courageously speak to him in our own words. In this way, we consider prayer to be a simple conversation with God. It is a conversation that comes in various forms: we ask petitions (or requests) of him, we give him thanks, and we give him praise. We might also ask for the intercession of Mary or the saints represented in the passage we read. At this phase, we can ask ourselves: What can I say to the Lord in response to his word?

Contemplatio (Contemplation)

A true encounter with the Lord always leads to transformation. Indeed, the Lord God proclaimed, “Behold, I make all things new” (Revelation 21:5). Through contemplation, we come to an understanding of the parts of our lives that need to be transformed by God’s grace. We humble ourselves and open our lives up to his transformative power. This step comes with the willingness to change, an openness and trust in God, and the decision to follow God’s will rather than our own. With this decision comes a fear of losing what we find comfortable and safe. At the same time, we feel the excitement of a call to heroic adventure and a hopeful future of living the life we are meant to live. At this step in the lectio divina process, we ask ourselves: What conversion of the mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?

Actio (Action)

Finally, although this phase is often not considered to be a part of lectio divina proper, it is an essential result of the encounter with God in Sacred Scripture. As Pope Benedict XVI wrote in *Verbum Domini*,

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“We do well also to remember that the process of lectio divina is not concluded until it arrives at action (actio), which moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity” (no. 87). Having received God’s love and grace, we go forth to serve others out of the love we have been given. Our transformation calls us to witness to others; it calls us to selflessly serve our brothers and sisters in Christ. These acts are done not so much out of a sense of duty, but out of the inspiration, we receive from the acceptance in faith of God’s love.