



Archdiocese of St. Louis
Office of Sacred Worship
Lectio Divina
Thursday of the Seventeenth 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

Jer 18:1-6

This word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: Rise up, be off to the potter's house; there I will give you my message. I went down to the potter's house and there he was, working at the wheel. Whenever the object of clay which he was making turned out badly in his hand, he tried again, making of the clay another object of whatever sort he pleased. Then the word of the LORD came to me: Can I not do to you, house of Israel, as this potter has done? Says the LORD. Indeed, like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, house of Israel.

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Responsorial Psalm

Ps 146:1b-2, 3-4, 5-6ab

R. (5a) Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob. or: R. Alleluia.

Praise the LORD, O my soul; I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God while I live.

R. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob. or: R. Alleluia.

Put not your trust in princes, in the sons of men, in whom there is no salvation. When his spirit departs he returns to his earth; on that day his plans perish.

R. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob. or: R. Alleluia.

Blessed he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD, his God. Who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them.

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Alleluia

See Acts 16:14b

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Open our hearts, O Lord, to listen to the words of your Son.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Mt 13:47-53



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Jesus said to the disciples: “The Kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.”

“Do you understand all these things?” They answered, “Yes.” And he replied, “Then every scribe who has been instructed in the Kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old.” When Jesus finished these parables, he went away from there.



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LECTIONARY

- 1) **Exodus 40:16-21, 34-38**
The tabernacle is consecrated, with the ark and the ten commandments inside it, the golden propitiatory atop it. God's glory settles here, a cloud during the day, a fiery glow at night.
- 2) **Jeremiah 18:1-6**
The Lord is a potter, forming Israel anew out of the same clay that had previously turned out poorly.
- 3) **Matthew 13:47-53**
Jesus compares the reign of God to a net that draws good and useless fish from the sea and to a storeroom with new and old objects.
- 4) **John 11:19-27* or Luke 10:38-42***

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

Today we conclude the Book of Exodus, as important to Old Testament religion as the gospels are to the New. We also complete another of the major sections in Matthew's gospel, this one dedicated to the reign or kingdom of God (Matt 11:2-13:53). Oddly enough, the symbolic actions of the prophet Jeremiah announce the intention of God, the divine potter, to collapse the clay and start over again in forming Israel. While Exodus and Matthew come to an end, Jeremiah marks an end and a new beginning!

Yet, as we re-read these biblical selections, we discern God's merciful way of starting over again. In Exodus, we read of new stages in the journey of God's people into the future. Matthew's gospel does not stop with the fearful scene of the final judgment, with the wicked hurled into the fiery furnace. Another final parable is appended about the storeroom with *new* as well as old things.

As we meditate more carefully on this final chapter of Exodus, we find that it was composed after Solomon had built the magnificent Jerusalem temple. The details here reflect the dedication ceremony in the First Book of Kings, chap. 8. The history of Israel had advanced many stages from the wilderness days of Moses to the sophisticated and centralized capital of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel in Solomon's time. Solomon was completing an extraordinary revolution in Israelite life. Chapter forty of Exodus places a stamp of divine approval upon the change; it was thoroughly in accord with Moses' spirit. The cloud by day and the fiery glow by night ratified each step along the way with God's sacred presence.

This transition from an ark that traveled with the people to an ark, immobile and enthroned in the Jerusalem temple did not happen easily. Not even David could take the ultimate step and build the temple. It was too radical a break with tradition. The prophet Nathan had first acquiesced but then had to return a negative decision from God:

Should you build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day in which I led the Israelites out of Egypt to the present, but I have been going about in a tent under cloth. In all my wandering everywhere among the Israelites, did I ever utter a word to any one of the judges . . . to ask, why have you not built me a house of cedar? (2 Sam 7:6-7)

Biblical religion always had a forward vision about it. It never consecrated a past golden age but moved onwards towards its messianic age. Along the way, it took monumental leaps forward. These changes were required at times by cultural or national crises, like the Philistine threat, which was overcome by the unification of the people in a twelve-tribe, one capital, one temple system under David and Solomon.

Other changes were required to renew and purify the people, as was the case when Jeremiah proposed the prophetic symbol of the potter:

Whenever the object of clay, which the potter was making, turned out badly in his hand, he tried again, making of the clay another object of whatever sort he pleased.

God is the divine potter and asks: "Can I not do to you, house of Israel, as the potter has done?" There is continuity. The clay is the same and the potter is the same, just as the ark carried memories of Moses.



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All of these transitions are difficult. They can seem as drastic and cruel as the gospel parable of the dragnet with worthwhile fishes and useless ones. In the fierce ordeal, some are hurled into the fiery furnace. Yet, this is not the end of Jesus' sermon. He adds one final parable—the storeroom from which: the head of the household . . . can bring . . . the new and the old.”

At all transitional moments, in our personal life as in church or national existence, we should learn: to be courageous to suffer through the change; to be clear-sighted enough and discern right timing, like the prophet Nathan; to recognize God's will and even his glorious presence in the new stage along the way; to safeguard tradition and continuity with the past.

Prayer:

Lord, you provide a home for the sparrow, a nest for the swallow. Let us always find our home in you. In the midst of change, then, we will go from strength to strength. We place our trust, not in human endurance, but in you who made heaven and earth and each new day of life.

*** 2010 ***

FOCUS: When we are attentive to the Lord, we can be formed by him.

Jesus desires that we be formed into people who please the Father. When we open our lives to be formed by the teaching of Jesus, we can be molded into such people, living our faith and boldly proclaiming Jesus to others. Following Jesus also strengthens us to embrace the suffering of life, for in him we have a promise of eternal life.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The prophet Jeremiah was guided by God to the potter's house, where God inspired him with a teaching about how God forms the house of Israel, like the potter forms the clay. In the Gospel, Jesus meets Martha after the death of her brother Lazarus. Martha affirms her faith that belief in Jesus leads to eternal life.

*** 2011 ***

FOCUS: God will judge us based on how we have responded to his grace and lived our lives.

God has revealed through Moses, the prophets, and the teachings and example of Jesus the way that leads to eternal life. God has also given us the gift of free will, which enables us to choose how we will live. He will judge us on how we respond to his grace and choose to lead our lives.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In today's first reading, Moses follows God's commands and builds the dwelling for the Lord. In the Gospel, Jesus uses the image of a catch of fish to describe the Kingdom of heaven. In the end, the good ones will be saved and the bad ones thrown away. So it will be for righteous people and wicked people.

*** 2012 ***

FOCUS: Placing our trust in God requires letting go of things that might hold us down.

Each day we are called to do our best and to trust that God will always be with us to help us. Jesus showed us how to trust and how to let go of our worries, cares, and frustrations. When we do this, we can more faithfully carry out the work God calls us to do.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In today's readings, God directs Jeremiah to go to the potter's house where clay is patiently formed into a beautiful object; likewise, God is patient with the house of Israel. Jesus describes the final judgment. Angels will preserve those who are good but throw the wicked into the fire.

*** 2013 ***

FOCUS: God is a God of justice.

Every new day brings with it a decision to follow the ways of Christ—will we strive to love others, forgive those who wrong us, and work for justice? The choices we make in this life will impact where we spend eternity. By our faith, we have reason to believe that God's justice and judgment upon us will be tempered with mercy.



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LITURGY OF THE WORD

When the cloud of God's glory covered the meeting tent of the Hebrews, Moses and everyone else understood that God was present. In the Gospel of Matthew today, Jesus concludes a series of parables before leaving the crowd. For those who could see and understand, Jesus also revealed the presence of God.

*** 2014 ***

FOCUS: God's power is mighty yet gentle.

The Scripture writer's use many images of God to help us better understand what we can never truly know. The seeming contradiction of a God who is all-mighty, yet all-loving; all-knowing, yet all-forgiving is difficult for us to grasp. Today we are reminded of God's power, but in the context of his desire for us to ultimately be with him.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Today's first reading gives the image of God as a potter, shaping us to serve whatever purpose he wishes. In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks of the good and the bad living alongside one another on this earth, with the angels separating them at the final judgment. Those who are truly righteous will be saved, while the others will be destroyed.

*** 2015 ***

FOCUS: Saints such as Peter Chrysologus are models of virtue and truth that we can emulate in our lives.

When paganism was prominent in Italy in the fifth century, Saint Peter Chrysologus stood as a pillar of truth. Through his homilies, and his corporal and spiritual works of mercy, he led his congregation with diligence and care. His witness gives us hope that we can be obedient to God's will in a time when many have turned away from God.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, Moses set up the dwelling of the meeting tent, as the Lord had commanded him. The glory of the Lord filled the tent. In the Gospel, Jesus reminds us that the Day of Judgment will come. The wicked will be thrown away and the righteous called home to eternity with him.

HOMILY

FOCUS: How do we discern what God is asking of us?

Some people, especially the saints, and prophets like Moses, receive private revelations where they hear God speak clearly, perhaps during prayer. We, at times, may sense a gentle nudge that comes to us like a thought. We think to ourselves, "I should call my mother." When we do, we may find out she has been ill, too ill to even call us. We are glad to have called and we make time to tend to her. Was it really our own thought or did the Holy Spirit inspire us to call her?

We make decisions every day. Are we always pausing to check in with what God wants of us in that moment? How can we know what he is asking of us?

We have a great gift in the Catholic Church where we are given precepts. These are basic acts that every good Catholic is called to; they help us ensure we are aligning our lives with God's will for us. We know that, as faithful Catholics, we are called to attend Mass on Sundays and other Holy Days of obligation. We are to be a prayerful people. We are encouraged to frequent reception of the sacraments of reconciliation and Eucharist. Daily reading of Scripture will help us nurture our relationship with Christ. We also have resources to help us, such as the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Vatican documents and letters from the pope.

Being righteous and obedient may not come easy for us. Following the basic tenets of our Catholic faith can seem daunting on some days. Instead of focusing on trying to receive private revelations, we should focus our time and energy on doing the basic acts that God, through the Church, has commanded us to do. When we do this, we will be able to discern what God is asking of us. At times, it is easier to know what God is asking of us than it is to do what he is asking of us. The day will come when the righteous will be separated from the rest. Among which group will we be found?

*** 2016 ***



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FOCUS: When Jesus returns in glory, there will be a final judgement, which will separate the good from the bad.

Jesus taught clearly that there will be a final judgement in which the righteous will enter into eternal life in heaven while the wicked will go off to eternal punishment. As such, we have a choice before us to follow the Lord and do his will, or suffer the consequences of our own selfishness. Even when we stray from the path, our God invites us to return to him.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading reminds us that God is the potter and we are the clay. He continues to mold and shape us to live more fully as his sons and daughters if we but cooperate with his grace. In the Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the net to make clear that at the end of time, there will be a final judgement in which the good will be separated from the bad.

*** 2017 ***

FOCUS: Glimpses of God's glory can be seen in creation all around us if we view it with the eyes of faith.

God's closeness to the people of Israel in their journey to the Promise Land is seen in simple things such as a tent, an ark, a cloud and fire. By opening our eyes to God's closeness to us in our world, we can be drawn nearer to him in our hearts.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The passage from Exodus shows how God remained close to his people while they wandered through the desert to the Promised Land. In the Gospel, Jesus uses everyday images such as fishermen separating good fish from bad fish to reveal to us what will happen at the end of the world.

*** 2018 ***

FOCUS: God is sovereign over our lives, both now and in the final judgement.

Today's Scripture reminds us of God's absolute sovereignty; God is the potter who fashions us according to his own designs. As clay in God's hands, let us work each day to be the disciples we are called to be.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, Jeremiah does as the Lord asks. He goes to the potter's house and awaits God's message, which conveys the image of God as a potter, fashioning his people, Israel. In the Gospel, Jesus tells two parables about the kingdom of heaven.

*** 2019 ***

FOCUS: Choose the way of life, not the way of death.

Our lives are full of choices. And the Lord sets before us one very important choice: between the way of life and the way of death (Cf. Jer 21:8, Deut 30:19, The Didache) As God led Moses and the Israelites toward the Promised Land, so he leads us into the kingdom through the Son. This is the way of life. May we have the grace to choose it, and to follow it well so we are welcomed by the angels at the end of the age.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, Moses followed the Lord's command to erect the Dwelling (dwelling-place, or tabernacle), into which he placed the ark containing the commandments. The glory of the Lord then filled the Dwelling, and covered it with a cloud. When the cloud lifted it led the Israelites on their continuing journey. Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a net collecting various fish, the good being put into buckets and the bad being thrown away.