



Archdiocese of St. Louis
Office of Sacred Worship
Lectio Divina
Wednesday of the First Week of Advent
Lectionary: 177

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

Is 25:6-10a

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines. On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all nations; he will destroy death forever. The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces; the reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth; for the Lord has spoken.

On that day it will be said: "Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us! This is the LORD for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!" For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.



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Responsorial Psalm

Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

R. (6cd) I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.

R. I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

He guides me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage.

R. I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

R. I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.

R. I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.



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Alleluia

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Behold, the Lord comes to save his people; blessed are those prepared to meet him.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Mt 15:29-37

At that time: Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, went up on the mountain, and sat down there. Great crowds came to him, having with them the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others. They placed them at his feet, and he cured them. The crowds were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the deformed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind able to see, and they glorified the God of Israel.

Jesus summoned his disciples and said, "My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way." The disciples said to him, "Where could we ever get enough bread in this deserted place to satisfy such a crowd?" Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" "Seven," they replied, "and a few fish." He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over—seven baskets full.



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LECTIONARY

1) Isaiah 25:6-10a

On his holy mountain God provides a banquet for all peoples. Death is destroyed and tears are wiped away. We behold our God to whom we looked for salvation.

2) Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

3) Matthew 15:29-37

Jesus cured people of many infirmities and multiplied bread lest they collapse on the way home.

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

The dream and great hope expressed by Isaiah is fulfilled in the Gospel miracles of Jesus. Jesus overcame death when he cured “cripples, the deformed, the blind, the mute and many others besides.” He laid out a magnificent banquet, multiplying loaves and fishes for common people who had followed him three days into the wilderness. Jesus asked them no questions ahead of time; he did not challenge their religious affiliation or ceremonial purity. He acted out of compassion:

My heart is moved with pity. . . . By now, they have been with me three days, and have nothing to eat. I do not wish to send them away hungry.

During Advent, we are led by God into the wilderness. Each Old Testament reading touches new hopes and stirs greater longing. None of these movements of the spirit will be frustrated. Seeing us, Jesus will be moved with pity.

The reading from Isaiah, like the one for Monday of this first week of Advent, is one of those unusual passages that leaps out of its context and articulates hidden desires far ahead of their time. Very few Old Testament passages open salvation to all nations and races. The fact that Israel’s religion rested upon the exodus out of Egypt and the covenant on Mount Sinai, that is, upon the doctrine of the election, leaves the Egyptians and other foreigners behind. The “non-elect,” at best, remain in a kind of limbo. Yet, in this passage, foreigners are called to be a part of Israel, just as in Monday’s reading they are invited to participate in the temple ceremonies at Jerusalem.

Still another unusual hope is expressed by this passage from Isaiah. God “will destroy death forever.” For most of the Old Testament, death marked the end of personal, conscious existence. People survived in their offspring and in the destiny of their nation. Texts like the one in Psalm 6 occur often enough:

For among the dead no one remembers you; in the nether world who gives you thanks? (Ps. 6:6).

Yet, as Israel was forced into contact with foreign nations, she began to appreciate their goodness and sincerity. Such is the conclusion reached in the books of Ruth and Jonah. As Israel had to face the mammoth problem of death striking the young, the innocent and even large numbers of people during the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, the people could not remain content with the traditional doctrine of election and of death. Individual texts like this one for Wednesday of the first week of Advent broke rank and expressed hopes long submerged or suppressed. God will certainly tear down the barriers between people and even the barrier between time and eternity.



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Even in the days of Jesus, these barriers were visibly present in the thinking of many people. The priestly Sadducees would not accept the resurrection of the body (Acts 23:6-8). Paul was opposed by a strong faction of Jewish disciples of Jesus who insisted that foreigners first become Jews if they are to be baptized as Christians (Gal 2). It takes a long time for great hopes to be accepted by people at large and at times by ourselves individually.

Each of us possesses ideas and hopes which may frighten us. We long to be a friendly brother or sister with everyone we meet. Yet we are afraid to take the risk, go into the wilderness and look to Jesus for direction and nourishment. We all believe that Jesus can work miracles. Yet, if we are stricken with a crippling illness and especially if we face death, fear throws up many barriers and our faith seems to vanish from sight. In the wilderness, we are not conscious of Jesus' presence. We panic! Like the disciples, we exclaim: It is hopeless! How could we ever get enough bread in this deserted spot to satisfy such a crowd?

Advent is a special period of prayer and recollection. We are asked by the Church to set aside more time than usual in order to live more intensively in God's presence. We are training ourselves to look ever more keenly and continuously toward Jesus. By fasting and self-denial, we feel even within our body as well as within our spirit how weak we are and how much we depend upon Jesus. Jesus in turn must look at us with pity and think how we will collapse on the way if he does not provide miraculous food.

Advent then encourages us to let our hidden hopes and desires lead us beyond our normal routine day-by-day existence. As we listen to the Scriptures, secret possibilities come to the surface. We allow ourselves to break loose from our ordinary context of life; we risk reaching beyond our normal, safe solutions. We leap over such barriers as racial or social divisions. We even survive death.

Each Eucharist during Advent ought to fulfill Isaiah's dream of "a feast of rich food and choice wines." The sacred ceremony ought to destroy the veil that veils all peoples" in prejudices and fears. Holy Communion unites us to all who have died. It "will wipe away the tears from all faces."

"This is the Lord for whom we looked"-he is born in our midst. We have prepared well for Christmas during this Advent.

Prayer:

Lord, you are coming and will not delay. You will bring every hidden hope to light and reveal yourself in these secret inspirations. Lead us into the wilderness and have pity on us.

FOCUS: Jesus came to bring new life, healing, peace and salvation to the world.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus taught that the day of salvation had come; that in and through him the Kingdom of God had broken into the world. The signs and wonders Jesus worked throughout his ministry testified to this. May we more fully open our hearts to Christ's love so we can experience its power in our lives, and share it with others.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading offers a wonderful vision of the salvation that God was working to bring about for his people Israel, and for all the people of the world. In the Gospel, great crowds gathered around Jesus. He



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ministered to their needs by curing the sick and by multiplying five loaves and two fish so that no one would go hungry.

*** 2012 ***

FOCUS: Like Jesus, we are called to reach out and welcome all members of God's family.

Society today tends to promote exclusion based on differences. Like Jesus, we should embrace everyone regardless of political stance, race or culture, or personal opinion on issues. We should not allow the presence of any preconceived idea to diminish our sense of another dignity.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Today's first reading speaks of Zion where the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces and destroy the veil that veils all people. In the Gospel, Jesus heals all who come to him and feeds all who were present; with food left over.

*** 2013 ***

FOCUS: *All ate and were satisfied.*

Imagine being invited to a feast prepared by God. Then imagine being part of a large crowd listening to Jesus preach and even possibly being healed by him. Then you watch as He takes loaves of bread and a few fish, blesses them and shares them with all present. This Advent season of preparation is the perfect time to *imagine*.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In today's reading from Isaiah, the Lord God invites us to a feast where he *will wipe away the tears from all faces*. Today's Gospel tells the story of how many in the crowds that followed Jesus were healed and then all were fed, with seven baskets of fragments left over.

*** 2014 ***

FOCUS: The Lord takes care of our needs.

Today's Gospel illustrates that Jesus is attentive to our every need. He knows what is best for us and provides the greatest gift Jesus has given us is the hope for everlasting life in heaven.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The reading from Isaiah speaks of God providing for his people. In Saint Matthew's Gospel, Jesus provides by feeding the large crowd from only seven loaves and a few fish, and performs many acts of healing. Large numbers of people come to believe in him as the son of God when they see the power of his miracles.

*** 2015 ***

FOCUS: The Lord shows us the abundance of giving.

Jesus miraculously heals the weak and the suffering, and provides a great abundance of food for their journey – all of these are signs that he is the promised Messiah. The Lord's compassion exemplifies the



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corporal and spiritual works of mercy. How shall we respond to God's generosity with us? When we follow Jesus' example of self-giving, our joy, as well as the joy of our neighbor, is multiplied.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The world of God's creation figures strongly in today's readings. The prophet Isaiah speaks of God's holy mountain: a place where God will provide for his people, destroy death forever and bring lasting joy. The psalmist leads us beside restful waters in the well-beloved twenty-third Psalm. The Gospel unites these themes by taking us to a high point near the Sea of Galilee. There, the Lord mercifully and abundantly feeds his people, giving us an example to follow.

***** 2017 *****

FOCUS: Christ heals and feeds his people.

We are all hungry. Some of us are in need of physical nourishment, while others starve from an inner hunger that can only be satisfied by a relationship with God. In our first reading, Isaiah reveals how the Lord will feed his people. This prophecy is fulfilled through the miracles Jesus performs in the Gospel, and continue to work today.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, Isaiah reveals the Lord's generous plan for all people. On the mountain, he prepares a great feast, destroys death, wipes away tears and defeats enemies. The miracles Jesus performs in the Gospel also take place on a mountain. He heals many people, and then feeds a crowd of four thousand with seven loaves of bread and a few fish.

***** 2018 *****

FOCUS: On God's holy mountain, God provides for all his people.

What was foretold by the prophet Isaiah came to pass in Jesus Christ. On the mountain, Jesus wiped away the tears from all who were suffering. On the mountain, Jesus set a feast for the hungry crowd from seven loaves and a few fish. On that mountain, Jesus stood as the promise of death overcome.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The prophet Isaiah foretells of the holy mountain on which the hand of the Lord will rest. On this mountain the Lord will provide for all peoples and destroy death forever. On a mountain by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus curse all who come to him and provides food for the crowd from seven loaves and a few fish.

***** 2019 *****

FOCUS: God is in our midst.

Mountains are sacred spaces of encounter between God and his people. Yet God's mountains are not always peaceful retreats. Rather, they can be busy with crowds and activity because God comes to meet us in our brokenness and need. God is not far off but in our midst through Jesus Christ, who heals, feed and saves us.

LITURGY OF THE WORD



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In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah envisions God's mountain as a blessed place of rejoicing for people of all nations. In the Gospel, Jesus cures and makes whole all who come to him on the mountain. With pity for the crowd, he feeds them with just a few loaves and fish.