



*Light and
Love in the
darkness*

CELEBRATING AT HOME LECTIO DIVINA FOR 25TH SUNDAY

God's outrageous generosity (Mt 20:1-16)

This resource is presented by the Carmelites of Australia & Timor-Leste at a time when we cannot gather together as we usually do to celebrate the Eucharist. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the words of the Gospel and in our own hearts. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for Lectio Divina you could have a lighted candle and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer.

Lectio Divina has four main stages. The first stage is *lectio* (reading) where we read the Word of God, slowly and reflectively so that it sinks into us.

The second stage is *meditatio* (reflection) where we think about the text we have chosen and ruminate upon it so that we take from it what God wants to give us.

The third stage is *oratio* (response) where we leave our thinking aside and simply let our hearts speak to God. This response is inspired by our reflection on the Word of God.

The final stage of Lectio Divina is *contemplatio* (rest) where we let go not only of our own ideas, plans and meditations but also of our holy words and thoughts. We simply rest in the Word of God. We listen at the deepest level of our being to God who speaks within us. As we listen, we are gradually transformed from within. This transformation will have a profound effect on the way we actually live our daily lives.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer you and all the members of our family at this time.

CELEBRATING AT HOME

LECTIO DIVINA FOR 25TH SUNDAY

Prayer

Spirit of truth, sent by Jesus to guide us to the whole truth, enlighten our minds so that we may understand the Scriptures. You, who overshadowed Mary and made her fruitful ground where the Word of God could germinate, purify our hearts from all obstacles to the Word. Help us to learn like her to listen with good and pure hearts to the Word that God speaks to us in life and in Scripture, so that we may observe the Word and produce good fruit through our perseverance.

A key to the reading

This passage places us within the section of the Gospel of Matthew, which directly precedes the account of the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus. This section begins in 19:1, where it is said that Jesus definitively leaves the territory of Galilee to go to Judea, beginning in this way the path to get close to Jerusalem and this is concluded in 25:46, with the account on the coming and the judgment of the Son of God. In particular, chapter 20 places us also along the road of Jesus towards the holy city and its temple, in a context of teaching and of polemics with the wise and the powerful of the time, which He carries out through parables and encounters.

Read (Matthew 20:1-16)

Jesus said to his disciples: “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, ‘You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage,’ So they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing round, and he said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ ‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. He said to them, ‘You go into my vineyard too.’ In the evening the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first.’ So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came,

they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it but grumbled at the landowner. ‘The men who came last,’ they said, ‘have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us, though we have done a heavy day’s work in all the heat.’ He answered one of them and said, ‘My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?’

“Thus the last will be first, and the first, last.”

Reflect

Spend a few moments in quiet reflection

Comment

The Vineyard

In the image of the vineyard, apparently very simple and ordinary, Scripture condenses a very rich and profound reality, always more dense in significance, gradually as the texts get closer to the full revelation of Jesus. In the first book of Kings, chapter 21, we read of the violent attack against Naboth, a simple subject of the corrupt King Ahab, who possessed a vineyard, planted, unfortunately, precisely next to the palace of the King. This account makes us understand how important the vineyard was, an inviolable property: Naboth would not have given it up for anything in the world. Out of love for it, he lost his life. Therefore, the vineyard represents the most precious good, the family heritage, in a certain way, the identity itself of the person; he cannot sell it, cede it to others, barter or trade it for other goods, which would never equal it. It hides a vital, spiritual force. Isaiah 5 tells us clearly that the vineyard signifies the people of Israel. The Lord has loved these people with an infinite and eternal love, sealed by an inviolable covenant; he takes care of it, just as a vine-dresser would do with his vineyard, doing everything possible so that it can bear more beautiful fruit.

The promise: one denarius

The Master of the vineyard establishes as the payment for the work of the day a denarius; a good sum, which allowed one to live with dignity. Our inheritance, our

salary is what is just, what is good: the Lord Jesus. He, in fact, does not give, does not promise other than Himself. Our reward is in Heaven (Mt 5:12), with our Father (Mt 6:1). It is not the money, the denarius which was used to pay the tax per-capita to the Romans, on which was the image and the inscription of King Tiberius Caesar (Mt 22: 20), but which is the face of Jesus, His name, His presence. He tells us, "I am with you not only today, but all days, until the end of the world. I myself will be your reward".

The sending out

The text offers to our life a very strong energy, which springs from the verbs "to send, to order" to go", repeated twice. Both concern us; they touch us deeply; they call us and put us in movement. It is the Lord Jesus who sends us, making of us his disciples: "Behold, I send you" (Mt 10:16). He calls us every day for his mission and repeats to us, "Go!" and our happiness is hidden precisely here, in the realization of this Word of His. Also where he sends us, in the way in which he indicates it, towards the reality and the persons whom He places before us.

The murmuring, the grumbling

These are words of utmost importance, true and very much present in our experience of daily life. We cannot deny this: they dwell in our heart, in our thoughts, sometimes they torment us, disfigure us, get us terribly tired, drive us away from ourselves, from others, from the Lord. Yes, we are also among those workers who complain and grumble, murmuring against the Master. The rumor of the murmuring comes from very far away, but it joins us and enters our heart. Israel in the desert murmured heavily against its Lord and we have received as inheritance those thoughts, those words: "The Lord hates us, that is why he brought us out of the land of Egypt to hand us over to the Amorites and to destroy us" (Deut 1:27) and we doubt his capacity to nourish us, to lead us ahead, to protect us: "Can God make a banquet in the desert?" (Ps 78:19). To murmur means not to listen to the voice of the Lord, not to believe anymore in his love for us: Therefore, we become scandalized, upset, strongly against the merciful

Lord and we get angry against his way of acting and we wish to change it, to make it smaller according to our own schema: he went to the house of a sinner! He eats and drinks with tax *collectors, with sinners!*" (Lk 5:30; 15:2; 19:7). If we listen well this is the secret murmuring of our heart. How to heal it? Saint Peter suggests this way: "Practice hospitality with one another, without murmuring" (I Pet 4: 9); only hospitality, that is, acceptance can, little by little, change our heart and open it to be receptive, capable of bearing within it persons, situations, the reality which we find in life. "Accept one another" says Scripture. And it is precisely like that: we have to learn to accept, above all, the Lord Jesus, as he is, with his way of loving and of remaining, of speaking with us and of changing us, of waiting for us and of attracting us. To accept him is to accept the one who is at our side, who comes to meet us; it is only this movement which can overcome the harshness of murmuring. Murmuring is born from jealousy, from envy, from our evil eye, as the Master of the vineyard says, Jesus himself. He knows how to keep us inside. He knows how to penetrate our look and reach our heart, in the spirit. He knows how we are, he knows us, loves us; And it is out of love that he brings out of us the evil within, takes off the veil from our evil eye. He helps us to become aware or conscious of how we are, of what is within us. At the moment when He says, "Perhaps your eye is evil?" as he is doing today in this Gospel, he heals us, he takes the balm and spreads it, takes the clay made with his saliva and puts it on our *eyes, to the very depth.*

Final Prayer

Thank you, O Father, for having revealed your Son to me and for having made me enter into his inheritance, in his vineyard. You have rendered me a branch, have rendered me a grape: now I only need to remain in him, in you and allow myself to be taken as good fruit, ripe, to be placed in the press. Yes, Lord, I know it: this is the way, I am not afraid, because you are with me. I know that the only way to happiness is the gift of self to you. That I may be a branch, that I may be good grapes, to be squeezed, as you wish! Amen.