



*Light and
Love in the
darkness*

CELEBRATING AT HOME LECTIO DIVINA FOR 28TH SUNDAY

Invitations refused and accepted

(Mt 22:1-14)

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 28TH 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 grow, 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. Amen.

A key to the reading

The meaning of the parable is quite clear when we read it in its context. It comes straight after another parable on the Kingdom (21:33-43) and is part of an argument between Jesus and the high priests and the Pharisees on his mission and authority (see 21:23-46).

In the preceding parable on the vineyard, Jesus sums up the history of salvation. God enveloped Israel with special care and hoped that such care would have produced fruit in the shape of a life of faithfulness and justice. From time to time God sent prophets to remind the people of the fruit that God expected, but their mission always met with Israel's rejection. Finally, God sent his own Son, but they killed him. At this point Jesus says that because Israel continued to reject the Realm, the Realm would therefore pass on to another people, that is, the pagans (21:43). This pronouncement gives us the key to the reading of our parable, which really repeats the message of the previous parable using a different image and with different nuances.

We must affirm clearly that both parables can in no way justify the idea that God rejected Israel in favor of the Church. Jesus says hard things, prophetic things, to draw his people to repentance and for them to accept him. The pagans too, the newly invited ones, run the risk of being thrown out if they do not wear the wedding garment.

Read (Matthew 22:1-14)

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his

servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come.

Next he sent some more servants. 'Tell those who have been invited' he said, 'that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding.' But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them.

The king was furious. He dispatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding.' So these servants went out to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth." For many are called but few are chosen.'

Reflect

Spend a few moments in quiet reflection

Comment

The banquet of the Kingdom

The prophets often proclaimed the benefits of salvation and especially those of the eschatological times through the image of a banquet. The first reading of this Sunday (Is 25:6-10a) is an example. Like Jesus, Isaiah too speaks of a banquet prepared by God for all peoples. However, the people of Israel and especially the city of Jerusalem remain at the center of God's plan as mediators of the salvation offered by God for all.

In the New Testament, however, even though there is an admission that "salvation comes from the Jews" (Jn 4:22), the only mediator of salvation is Jesus,

who continues to exercise his mediation through the community of his disciples, the Church.

The wedding garment

It is an insult to the one who has sent the invitation to arrive at the feast wearing ordinary working clothes. It is sign of not giving proper consideration for the occasion to which one is invited. This image, used in the parable on the Kingdom, wants to convey the idea that one cannot enter the Kingdom without preparation, and the only preparation is conversion. In fact, to change garment in biblical terms means to change style of life or to be converted (see for instance Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:20-24).

“Many are called but few are chosen”

This expression is a semitism. In the absence of comparisons, biblical Hebrew uses expressions that are based on drastic opposites. Hence this expression says nothing on the numerical relationship between those called into the Church and the elect to eternal life. However, it is also true that the parable makes a distinction between the call to salvation, election and final perseverance. The generosity of the ruler is huge, but we must be serious about the demands of the Kingdom. The expression is a pressing appeal not to be satisfied with just formal membership among the people of God. We cannot take salvation for granted. Here Jesus follows closely the teaching of the prophets.

Final Prayer

God, Lord of the world and ruler of all peoples, from the beginning you have prepared a banquet for your children and you wish to gather us around your table to share in your own life. We thank you for having called us into your Church through Jesus your Son. May your Spirit make us ever attentive and ready to continue to accept your invitation and may we, through the same Spirit, put on the new person, created according to God in justice and in true holiness, in the image of Christ, so that we may enter the banquet of your Kingdom together with a multitude of brothers and sisters. Use us as you wish to continue to call others to the universal banquet of your Kingdom. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.