



*Light and  
Love in the  
darkness*

## CELEBRATING AT HOME LECTIO DIVINA FOR 29<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY

### *The image of God (Mt 22:15-21)*

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 29<sup>TH</sup> 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

Jesus comes from Galilee to Jerusalem for the annual feast of the Pasch. As He enters the city, He is acclaimed by the people (Mt 21:1-11). He immediately goes to the temple where He drives the vendors away (Mt 21:12-16). Although He stays in Jerusalem, He spends the nights outside the city and returns to the city in the morning (Mt 21:17). The situation is very tense. In his discussions with the authorities, the high priests, the elders and the Pharisees in Jerusalem, Jesus expresses himself in parables (Mt 21,23 a 22,14). They would like to get hold of him, but they are scared (Mt 21:45-46). This Sunday's Gospel on the tribute due to Caesar (Mt 22,15-21) is situated within this general state of conflict between Jesus and the authorities.

### Read (Matthew 22:15-21)

The Pharisees went away to work out between them how to trap Jesus in what he said. And they sent their disciples to him, together with the Herodians, to say, 'Master, we know that you are an honest man and teach the way of God in an honest way, and that you are not afraid of anyone, because a man's rank means nothing to you. Tell us your opinion then. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' But Jesus was aware of their malice and replied: 'You Hypocrites! Why do you set this trap for me? Let me see the money you pay the tax with.' They handed him a denarius, and he said, 'Whose head is this? Whose name?' 'Caesar's,' they replied. He then said to them, 'Very well, give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar - and to God what belongs to God.'

### Reflect

*Spend a few moments in quiet reflection*

### Comment

#### **The context of our text of the Gospel of Matthew**

As we were saying, the context of the Gospel of the 29th Sunday is the debate between Jesus and the authorities. It begins with the discussion with the priests and elders on the authority of Jesus (Mt 21:23-27). Then comes the parable of the two sons where Jesus denounces the hypocrisy of some groups (Mt 21:28-32). There follow two parables, one of the murderous wine growers (Mt 21:33-46) and another concerning those who are invited but refuse to attend the wedding feast (Mt 22:1-14). At this point in our text (Mt 22:15-22) the Pharisees and the Herodians enter to set a trap. They ask Him about the tribute to be paid to the Romans. It was a tricky question that divided public opinion. They wanted to accuse Jesus and so lessen his influence over the people at all costs. The Sadducees immediately begin to question Him on the resurrection of the dead, another controversial question and cause of dissent between the Sadducees and the Pharisees (Mt 22:23-33). It all ends with a discussion on the greatest commandment of all (Mt 22:34-40) and the Messiah as son of David (Mt 22:41-45).

Like Jesus, the Christians of the communities in Syria and Palestine for whom Matthew was writing his Gospel were accused and questioned by the authorities, by other groups, and by their neighbors who felt uncomfortable because of the witness of the disciples. When reading these episodes of conflict with the authorities, they felt comforted and encouraged to continue on their journey.

#### **Matthew 22:15-17: The question of the Pharisees and Herodians.**

The Pharisees and Herodians were the local authorities who did not enjoy popular support in Galilee. They had decided that it was time to kill Jesus (Mt 12:14; Mc 3,6). Now, by order of the priests and elders, they want to know whether Jesus is in favor of, or against, paying tribute to the Romans. A deliberate question and full of malice! Under the guise of fidelity to the law of God, they seek reasons for accusing him. If Jesus were to say: "You must pay!" they would accuse him, together with the people, of being a friend of the Romans. If He were to say: "You must not pay!" they would accuse him, together with the Roman authorities, of being a subversive. A dead end!

**Matthew 22:18-21a: Jesus' reply: show me a coin.** Jesus is aware of their hypocrisy. In his reply, He wastes no time in useless discussion and goes directly to the heart of the question: "Whose portrait is this? Whose title?" They answer: "Caesar's!"

**Matthew 22:21b: Jesus' conclusion**

Jesus then draws the conclusion: "Pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God!". In fact, they had already acknowledged Caesar's authority. They already paid Caesar what belonged to Caesar since they used his money to buy and sell and even to pay the tribute to the Temple! Hence, the question was useless. Why ask something whose answer was clear in practice? They, who by their question pretended to be servants of God, were in fact forgetting the most important thing: they forgot to give God what belongs to God! What mattered to Jesus was that "they pay to God what belongs to God", that is, they mislead the people that they had lead away from God through their own fault, because through their teachings they prevented people

from entering the Kingdom (Mt 23:13). Rather say: "Pay to God what belongs to God", which is, practice justice and honesty according to the demands of the law of God, because by your hypocrisy you are denying God what is due to Him. The disciples must be aware of this! Because it was the hypocrisy of these Pharisees and Herodians that was blinding their eyes! (Mk 8:15).

### Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice that which your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to but also practise the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.