



Lectio Divina



Introduction

Lectio Divina is a dynamic, life-oriented approach to reading Holy Scriptures encouraged by both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. It provides a framework for a faithful and respectful reading of the Bible that is sincere and authentic.

Lectio Divina is a blessing for the entire Church as it opens up the rich truths of Scripture for every Christian. Through it believers are invited to read, understand and deepen their appreciation of the Scriptures and to seek guidance for their lives in the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

Our real goal is to meet our Lord as we read his Word and allow him to transform our lives, to be more like him, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

All the information necessary for you to have a meaningful encounter with God's Word is included here. These outlines can be used individually or in groups.

The following pages introduce the four steps of *Lectio Divina* with some extra tips for using these outlines in groups.

30

An introduction to Lectio Divina - History



Lectio Divina dates back to the early Church Fathers around 300 AD. The four steps were first recorded by a monk, Guigo Cartujo, in 1173. These steps, Lectio (Reading), Meditatio (Meditation), Oratio (Prayer) and Contemplatio (Contemplation) remain central today although methods differ.

Overview

In essence **Lectio Divina is a simple way to meet with the Lord** through reflection and prayer based on Holy Scripture. It is not a study method. Background knowledge can be helpful but is not essential.

Used in groups a structure is necessary but for individuals the steps need not be followed rigidly. Our aim is meeting God, not just completing the steps themselves. So when the Lord impresses something in us we need to stop and wait. We can always come back to the steps another time. We don't want to lose what God is saying to us.

LECTIO – READING

Reading the Scripture passage humbly and prayerfully is the foundation for everything else that follows and cannot be rushed. **So begin with a prayer** and ask the Holy Spirit to 'lead you into all the truth' (John 16:13).

Read the passage slowly and carefully. Avoid being tempted to look at the Lectio comments or any of the other steps at this stage.

Have a notebook and pencil ready. **Underline, or make a note of** any words or phrases that stand out to you. **Write down any questions** that occur to you.

Read the passage several times and read it aloud. Give yourself time to understand and appreciate what is being said.

Now read the Lectio comments and reflect on the ways they are similar or different to your first thoughts.



MEDITATIO – MEDITATION

Meditation deepens our appreciation of the passage and helps us to explore its riches. We read in 2 Timothy 3:16 that 'All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instructions for right living...' **So approach Scripture in faith expecting God to speak to you.** He may reveal something of himself to you. He might highlight an attitude or behaviour of yours that needs to change. He might show you a promise to encourage and strengthen you. Here are some suggested approaches you may find helpful.

Use your imagination. Picture the passage; put yourself into the scene and become part of the story. See things through the eyes of the other characters, listen to what they say, watch their reactions, imagine how they feel.

Keep coming back to Jesus. Get to know him; delight yourself and become fascinated by him, his words, his actions, the way he responds – everything about him.

Ask questions. Use your own questions and the questions given to think more deeply about the passage and what God wants to say to you. Ask Jesus why he did and said certain things. Try to understand his reasons and intentions. Allow time for quiet, to listen and hear his answer.

Let the Word be a mirror for you. As we read the Bible it shows us more of what Christian life looks like and where our lives need to change. We see how God's Word applies to our daily life, as an individual, and as part of our community and society. We will find promises and encouragement, challenges and demands. If we are willing, God will nurture and free us to be more fully human and fully alive.

ORATIO – PRAYER

Prayer opens up a conversation between God and us. In the Psalms we see how the writers pour out their feelings to God, often mixing hopes and fears side by side. God values our honesty. We cannot hide anything from him anyway. Using the words of the responsorial psalm can help us but we can also use our own words to have a heart-to-heart conversation with a very special friend. Through prayer we make our response to the light God's Word has shed on how we are living our lives. Now we can bring what is happening in our own life and in our community before God. We speak and listen, listen and reflect – it is a conversation with God.

CONTEMPLATIO – CONTEMPLATION

To help us interpret the Gospel reading, the Liturgy provides two further Scripture readings. Reflecting on these can both enrich our understanding of the text and bring into focus a response we may need to make to the Lord.

Contemplation gives us the opportunity for **an intimate time of communion with God**. Be still before God and invite him in. Few words, if any, are necessary here. Enjoy time in his presence. Just be with him and let him love you. Let him refresh your soul.

After you have finished your time of reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation you may want to **jot down in a notebook any experiences** or thoughts that particularly impressed you. You may find it helpful to look back at these later.

USING THESE OUTLINES IN GROUPS

When **Lectio Divina** is used in a group a little preparation is needed.

32



LECTIO

Individual reading. To start with, give everyone time to read through the passage silently. Proclamation of the Word. **One person reads** (proclaims) the Word. This is the traditional manner of reading in the liturgical celebration. **Two readers.** Two people read the text aloud alternately. Each person reads a verse. This is a way of involving each participant, inviting each to read from his own Bible, so that the reading is attentive and dynamic.

Audio version. If you have access to a recorded version of the text you could also use that. You may notice different words are stressed.

With different characters. Approach the text somewhat like a drama, in which one person is the narrator/reader, another takes the part of Jesus, a third takes another character. This can be the most dynamic or engaging method and helps us to identify just what the different characters in the passage are saying.

MEDITATIO

🔍 In the group setting, it is important that everyone is given time to take part, to **share what the Lord has been saying to them**. While the Lord speaks through his Word, he also speaks to us through our brothers and sisters. So as we listen to others we need to open our hearts to hear the Lord's voice speaking through them.

■ It is important that everyone in the group understands that this **sharing is to build one another** up and enrich our experience. It is not necessary that everyone agrees about what is shared. You need to be careful to avoid this time turning into a debate or argument. The Lord knows us each as individuals so will have different things to say to us personally at this specific point in our lives.

📖 You can start with a simple question like “What catches your attention in this passage?” and use the printed questions. The aim is to help everyone feel comfortable to speak and share how the text has inspired them. **Gently keep the group focused on the text and what God is saying.**

ORATIO

We suggest you give people time for **personal silent prayer before God**. You can also give the opportunity for people to pray aloud in their own words and use verses from the responsorial prayer. The aim should be to help each person make a personal response to the Lord during this time.

CONTEMPLATIO

Contemplation, by its very nature, is an individual exercise and silence is necessary. If you have room it may be helpful to suggest people to move so they may have their own ‘personal space’.



May our Hearts be close
to our Lord, as much as possible,
and let us offer up our Work
frequently to Him.

Magdalene of Canossa

Healer and Preacher



Mark 1:29-39

Jesus and his disciples, including James and John, left the synagogue and went straight to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a fever, and as soon as Jesus arrived, he was told about her. He went to her, took her by the hand, and helped her up. The fever left her, and she began to wait on them. After the sun had set and evening had come, people brought to Jesus all the sick and those who had demons. All the people of the town gathered in front of the house. Jesus healed many who were sick with all kinds of diseases and drove out many demons. He would not let the demons say anything, because they knew who he was.

Very early the next morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of the town to a lonely place, where he prayed. But Simon and his companions went out searching for him, and when they found him, they said, "Everyone is looking for you." But Jesus answered, "We must go on to the other villages round here. I have to preach to them also, because that is why I came." So he travelled all over Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and driving out demons.



Other Readings

Job 7:1-4,6-7

Psalms 147:1-6

1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23



LECTIO

After **his authoritative preaching** and **the dramatic deliverance of a man with an evil spirit** (Mark 1:21-28), Jesus went with his disciples to Simon Peter's house. We are not told much about Peter's family but learn he is married because he has a **mother-in-law**. She is in bed with a fever. When **Jesus** is told this he takes her hand, **helps her up and she is instantly healed**.

News about what happened at the synagogue in the morning, and this healing, appears to have electrified the whole town. Imagine the excitement and impatience as people have to wait until evening, when the Sabbath rest ends. But as soon as they can, the whole town gathers in front of Peter's house. **They bring with them all the sick and those who have demons**. It must have been an incredible evening. **Many people were healed and many set free from demons**. Jesus stayed the night in Peter's home.

In the morning, while everybody was still asleep, Jesus left the house and went **'to a lonely place' to pray**. Eventually Peter and his friends found him and told him that everyone was looking for him. But instead of returning, Jesus insists they move on to other towns and villages **so he could preach to them too**.



MEDITATIO

- ❓ Why was it so important for Jesus to be alone to pray? What can we learn **from Jesus' example about the priority he places** on spending time alone with God?
- ❓ Peter wanted Jesus to capitalise on the 'success' of his ministry in Capernaum. **But God had other plans**. How can we ensure we please God rather than others, however well-meaning they may be?



ORATIO

Read Psalm 147 aloud as a prayer, alone or with friends. It sums up many of the good things about Jesus which we find in today's Gospel reading. It also reminds us that Jesus is the Lord.

Ask God to help you give the same priority to spending time with him as Jesus did.



CONTEMPLATIO

The liturgy tries to identify the sufferings of sick people in the reading of Job 7: 1-4, 6-7. Jesus, who heals the sick, shows that **God is not insensitive to their sufferings.**

The mission of Jesus to preach the Gospel is recalled in 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23 by the Apostle Paul when he speaks of **his duty to continue preaching the Word of God** so that he may save many people.



MAGDALENE of CANOSSA

The understanding of a charism takes place in the understanding of faith and of its structure, that is, of faith as a choice, as a consequence and as an attitude.

The Christian faith is a personal choice of adherence to the Gospel, an act of free will in receiving the **Good News of Jesus**. This Good News has as its consequence the privilege of knowing God as our Father and Mother, in the humanity of Jesus who, in becoming one of us, works in us and among us through the gift of **his Spirit** given to everyone. This faith possesses, at the same time, personal, communitarian, ecclesial and practical features. The basic image of Christian faith is **the encounter with Jesus of Nazareth**, prophet of the Reign of God, dead and risen, Son of God and Lord of all, believed in, celebrated, witnessed and proclaimed by the Church.

The love of Jesus Crucified,

source of the charism of Magdalene

36



Magdalene realised that her life and work were deeply influenced and directed by the paradoxical contrast that she contemplated in Jesus Crucified. While Jesus seemed externally reduced by historical circumstances to the powerlessness of the cross, struck down by rejection and by absence of love, his inner life was very active, as **he exercised virtue in the highest degree** and practised charity towards God and neighbour in an unsurpassable manner.

The Lord Jesus did not allow himself to be conditioned by external forces, but continued to live a life interiorly moved **by his most amiable, most generous and most patient Spirit.**

This freedom to love, freeing a person from slavery, constitutes the apex of the revelation of God, and becomes the great attraction as well as the grace that inspired Magdalene: ***“I felt transported to love Jesus with the heart of Jesus as I could not do so by myself.”***

Power over Sin and Sickness



Mark 2:1-12

A few days later Jesus went back to Capernaum, and the news spread that he was at home. So many people came together that there was no room left, not even in front of the door. Jesus was preaching the message to them when four men arrived, carrying a paralysed man to Jesus. Because of the crowd, however, they could not get the man to Him. So they made a hole in the roof right above the place where Jesus was. When they had made an opening, they let the man down, lying on his mat. Seeing how much faith they had, Jesus said to the paralysed man, “My son, your sins are forgiven.”

Some teachers of the Law who were sitting there thought to themselves, “How does he dare to talk like this? This is blasphemy! God is the only one who can forgive sins!” At once Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he said to them: “Why do you think such things? Is it easier to say to this paralysed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven’, or to say, ‘Get up, pick up your mat and walk’? I will prove to you, then, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralysed man, “I tell you, get up, pick up your mat and go home!” While they all watched, the man got up, picked up his mat and hurried away. They were all completely amazed and praised God, saying: “We have never seen anything like this!”



Other Readings

Isaiah 43:18-19, 21-22, 24-25

Psalm 41:1-4, 12-13

2 Corinthians 1:18-22





LECTIO

Let's picture the scene Mark is describing. **A paralysed man** is carried by his friends to the house where Jesus is teaching. The man appears to be completely helpless and passive. If he can speak, we are not told that he made any plea for himself, unlike the leper.

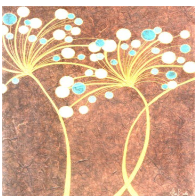
But his friends are very active indeed. They carry the paralytic on his stretcher and bring him to Jesus because **they have great faith**. But first they must solve the problem of getting the man past the crowd to Jesus. They come up with a radical solution. They **make a hole in the roof** over Jesus' head and lower their friend down right in front of Jesus.

Jesus recognises their faith in him and the plea their action implies. They are making a very practical appeal for Jesus to physically heal their friend. But first Jesus deals with a **deeper problem – sin**. Jesus addresses this problem with **forgiveness**. Then, as a sign of his authority to forgive sin, **Jesus heals the man of his paralysis as well**. At the end of this encounter Jesus refers to himself as the **'Son of Man'**.



MEDITATIO

- ❓ What do we learn about Jesus from this passage? **What are the main lessons we need to learn for our life today?**
- ❓ This event clearly demonstrates that Jesus has authority over sin and sickness. **Consider what this means for you.**
- ❓ Have there been times when you have felt helpless, unable to even ask God to help you? Perhaps you know someone who is 'spiritually paralysed' right now, who needs help getting to Jesus. **Ask God to show you how you could help them.**



ORATIO

We may be among those who are troubled by sin which they have committed earlier in their lives. Catholic Christians know that they can be pardoned of their sins by confessing them to a priest. **All of us have to repent and ask God to forgive our sins.**

We can use the words of Psalm 41 to help us: "I said, **'I have sinned against you, Lord; be merciful to me and heal me.'**"





CONTEMPLATIO

The liturgy includes two readings that are packed with promises about forgiveness **and God's faithfulness**. If you are struggling with past or current sins, Isaiah 43:18-25 offers the perfect solution. God urges his people not to dwell on past events but reminds them his forgiveness is based on **his loving nature**. When we repent his response is an unconditional **'I will not hold your sins against you'**. This is reinforced by the second reading 2 Corinthians 1:18-22. **Through Jesus all God's promises are fulfilled** with a resounding 'Yes'! Not maybe, sometimes or perhaps, but a cast-iron 'Yes'.



MAGDALENE of CANOSSA

The fullness of the love of Jesus Crucified

39



The contemplation of the love of Jesus Crucified leads Magdalene to understand three inter-related aspects:

☪ **The full and definitive revelation of the merciful love of the Father for everyone**, of the “effusion of the Divine Mercies,” of “Divine Charity”, “Divine Goodness”. In a historical period conditioned by structures that create discriminations and gaps, situations of poverty and marginalization, God intervenes by coming among us, bringing healing and reconciliation. Through his mercy, God restores the dignity of the human person through fraternal relationships. Fidelity to **God alone** and the search for his glory led Magdalene towards contemplation and the three Branches of Charity: to be “*alone with God alone*” and “*most zealous in working for the Lord*” (M, XIII, 13).

☪ **The revelation of the way in which God is moved by love to come to us**. In Jesus, God becomes one of us, subjecting himself to humiliation, to poverty, to the lowliest condition, to the point of being “*stripped of everything except love, breathing nothing but charity.*”

It is the way that Magdalene finds Paul proclaiming in the Christological Hymn in his letter to the Philippians: “*For our sake, the Divine Lord became obedient unto death, death on the cross.*” Jesus himself refers to this when He presents himself and his ministry to the disciples: “*Our Divine Saviour when he appeared visibly on this earth for our salvation, even though he was Omnipotent and God most High, he stated that he had come to serve and not to be served.*” This is the way that Magdalene summed up in writing of the virtues of Jesus Crucified: obedience, humility, poverty. Magdalene makes herself a servant of the poor, becoming poor to serve the poor. Magdalene understood that she could not love the poor as a rich lady, but it was the love of Jesus Crucified which gave her the honour of serving them.

☪ **The revelation of the same purpose that God had when he came to meet us along the way of love**. It was to enkindle the same love in us because it is there that we find life, the salvation of life and the fullness of life in God.

By making Jesus Christ known, “*first of all, we arouse holy charity in the heart, and then teach them how to practise it.*”



**Be
Clean!**

Mark 1:40-45



A man suffering from a dreaded skin disease came to Jesus, knelt down and begged him for help. "If you want to," he said, "you can make me clean." Jesus was filled with pity, and stretched out his hand and touched him. "I do want to," he answered. "Be clean!"

At once the disease left the man, and he was clean.

Then Jesus spoke sternly to him and sent him away at once, after saying to him, "Listen, don't tell anyone about this. But go straight to the priest and let him examine you; then in order to prove to everyone that you are cured, offer the sacrifice that Moses ordered." But the man went away and began to spread the news everywhere. Indeed, he talked so much that Jesus could not go into a town publicly.

Instead, he stayed out in lonely places, and people came to him from everywhere.



Other Readings

40



Leviticus 13:1-2,44-46

Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1



LECTIO

Leprosy is curable today. But in Jesus' day there was no medicine and no cure; leprosy brought with it a life sentence for the sufferer. **Anyone appearing to have leprosy was considered infectious and cast out from family, friends, home and work.**

They were obliged to live in isolated places and this social problem caused great suffering for the lepers and their families. People with leprosy **could no longer participate in religious activities at the Temple** or synagogue because they were ritually unclean. Effectively you were **dead to your family and society**. Only the priest's declaration of freedom from disease opened the door back into the community.

We do not know whether Jesus went to this man on purpose; it would appear that they were alone when they met. The leper made **a touching plea and an act of faith: 'You can heal me if you want'.**

Jesus didn't hesitate. He touched him and said, **'Be clean.'** The man was instantly cured. As a pious Jew, Jesus told the man to do what the Law of Moses required in such circumstances, **to go and see the priest** (Leviticus 14:2-32). He also told him not to tell anyone about his healing. But the leper could not contain himself, he disregarded what Jesus said **and told everyone about his healing**. As a result the crowds sought Jesus to such an extent that he could no longer enter a town publicly. He had to stay out in the countryside.



MEDITATIO

- 2 The man had faith and was miraculously healed **but then disobeyed Jesus**. Why do you think he did that?
- 2 **Jesus has a message for the leper** and for us here – what do you think it is?
- 2 Everything about the leper revealed him as an outcast. He even had to shout, 'Unclean' if other people were around. **How do you respond to those who are considered 'outcasts' in your Church or town?**



ORATIO

The leper wasn't afraid to ask for what seemed impossible. Faith moved him towards Jesus. Luke 1:37 says **'there is nothing that God cannot do'**. Repeat this phrase to yourself several times.

Ask God to increase your faith in him. Jesus was moved with pity and it caused him to act. Ask God to show you how to respond to those in need.





CONTEMPLATIO

The first reading spells out the law about skin diseases (Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46). The future for those with 'a dreaded skin disease' was very bleak. Faith with action led this man to reach out to Jesus with a simple prayer. **How do you put your faith into action?** In the second reading (1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1) Paul encourages us **to model ourselves on Jesus**. This means thinking about others with different beliefs so that they too can encounter Jesus.



MAGDALENE of CANOSSA

The love of Jesus Crucified

fulfilment of Magdalene's search

42



In Jesus Crucified and in the revelation and fulfilment of his love on the Cross, Magdalene finds the integration of motivations, yearnings and tensions she has sought and struggled to achieve in her youth. From her "Memoirs" we can identify five such yearnings:

- **The search to please God**, the desire to anchor her life in the one only God, and "God alone" is the path that leads her to Him.
- **The need to help the poor**, that is those who are marginalized and deprived of the opportunity that society offers. These are the "neighbours in need", those whose abandonment does not help to show that God is the Father of all.
- **The commitment to counteract evil and to foster all that is life-giving**, so as to release the salvific energies of the Gospel.
- **The missionary thrust**, the understanding of the universality of the Gospel as the unconditional love of God for all people.
- **The search for the glory of God**, of the divine glory, the desire to "seek only the Glory of God and the salvation of souls, surrendering to him the thought of everything else."

These five yearnings, which spurred Magdalene to look for possible solutions to lessen one or the other of the tensions, find their **source of integration in the two-fold commandment of love**, expressed by the Lord on the Cross. There **He shows his love for the Father** by giving his life for the love of people, thus giving glory to God as well as sanctifying men and women.

In the Cross of Jesus, Magdalene sees the indivisible integration of the **religious thrust** and the **empowering missionary thrust** that she feels deep within her being. In this source of integration, Magdalene recognises the **configuration of her charism**. This has become the path for her, the purpose that leads her to planning and implementation.



The Miracle of the Lake



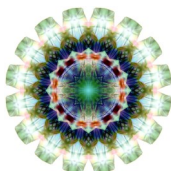
Mark 4:35-41

On the evening of that same day Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us go across to the other side of the lake.” So they left the crowd; the disciples got into the boat in which Jesus was already sitting, and they took him with them. Other boats were there too.

Suddenly a strong wind blew up, and the waves began to spill over into the boat, so that it was about to fill with water. Jesus was in the back of the boat, sleeping with his head on a pillow. The disciples woke him up and said, “Teacher, don’t you care that we are about to die?”

Jesus stood up and commanded the wind, “Be quiet!” and he said to the waves, “Be still!” The wind died down, and there was a great calm. Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Why are you frightened? Have you still no faith?”

But they were terribly afraid and said to one another, “Who is this man? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”



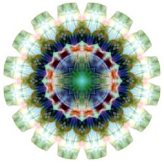
Other Readings

Job 38:1. 8-11

Psalms 107:23-26. 28-31

2 Corinthians 5:14-17





LECTIO

Mark uses this incident to throw a vivid light on Jesus, his personality and identity. With just a couple of words Jesus commands the elements, something normally done by God alone.

The same situation is **a test for the disciples**. Jesus and the disciples are travelling by boat across Lake Galilee.

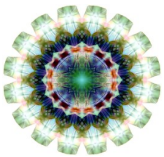
Suddenly a storm hits and the waves threaten to sink the boat. **Jesus**, we discover, **is sleeping soundly** at the back of the boat.

The disciples **wake him urgently** and accuse him of not caring that they are all about to die.

Jesus remains calm and in complete control. He commands the wind and the waves to be still. The storm is over. Jesus then chides his disciples for their lack of faith and for being afraid. They failed his test.

The disciples appear to have been badly shaken by their experience and Jesus' intervention. They are left still feeling afraid and asking themselves just who Jesus is that

'Even the wind and waves obey him!'



MEDITATIO

❓ What do you think the disciples' words and actions reveal of their thoughts about Jesus?

❓ **What does this passage reveal to us about Jesus' true identity? What lessons can we draw from it?**

❓ **Compare the disciples' reaction to this dangerous situation to Jesus' reaction.**

Jesus doesn't want us to be ruled by fear but by peace and faith in him. **What can we do when we find ourselves in frightening situations?** Sometimes we turn to Jesus as a last resort when of course he should be our very first thought.

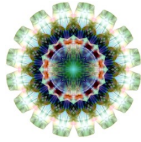


ORATIO



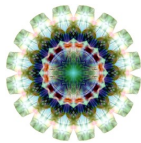
Psalm 107:23-31 tells us something about travelling by boat well before Jesus' time. The sailors were totally dependent on God and in many ways the events mimic the storms and moments of calm in our lives. As you pray through this Psalm ask God to remind you of some of the 'storms' you have weathered with his help. Why not jot them down in your notebook?

Next time a storm comes along, look at your notes and **this Psalm to remind you that God will help you through.**



CONTEMPLATIO

God is always with us and is more than able to keep the circumstances around us under control. Poor old Job had a good moan at God. After all he had suffered it wasn't really surprising. But in Job 38:8-11 God rebukes him and asks whether Job had been around when God was setting the world up. Of course he wasn't, but God's words remind us how mighty his power is. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 Paul reminds us that when we believe in Jesus we start a brand new spiritual life. **Love for Jesus should now be our driving force.** We should no longer be living our lives to please ourselves but, like the wind and waves, be ready to obey Jesus.



MAGDALENE of CANOSSA

The Twofold Commandment of Love

The contemplation of love in Jesus Crucified led Magdalene to understand the meaning of the twofold commandment of love in a very special way, as the synthesis of life according to the Gospel. Charity towards God and towards neighbour is enlightened "by the examples of the Spirit of Jesus Crucified."

The imperative, "**look and do as the exemplar**", indicates the way that leads to the fulfilment of the twofold commandment of love. **The contemplation of the virtues of Jesus Crucified spurs us to love God** in response to the love which God reveals to us in human form in our history. The same love contemplated in Jesus Crucified guides us in **our love for neighbour**, not by our own efforts but as God's sharing of his love towards all, in a particular way towards the poor. Our love is the "**active imitation**" or following of the Lord, in his dedication to every sister and brother, **especially the poorest**. In recognising and sharing the Love of God shown to us through Jesus Crucified, every person can reach fulfilment and thus **celebrate the glory of God and his love**.

The encounter with Jesus Crucified is seen as an offering of the availability of God's love expressed in human terms in his Son Jesus. It has the potential to become in us **a resource of life** which is filial and fraternal, thanks to the Spirit. **This offering** which, for us is an unending discovery, enables each one of us to arrive at **a decision, a choice** that adds value to our life, and to commit our personal and cultural resources towards attaining its fulfilment. **This decision of faith** continues to be nurtured by the benefits of the encounter which first initiated it, according to the forms used by the Lord Jesus and which the Church has adopted: **the Word, Sacraments and Ministry, in the unceasing creativity of the Spirit**. The decision of faith is modelled on the foundation of the Lord Jesus, and on the relationship with Him, through which we come to a gradual understanding of what it implies.





Jesus feeds 5,000



John 6:1-15

After this, Jesus went across Lake Galilee. A large crowd followed him, because they had seen his miracles of healing for those who were ill. Jesus went up a hill and sat down with his disciples. The time for the Passover Festival was near.

Jesus looked round and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, so he asked Philip, “Where can we buy enough food to feed all these people?” (He said this to test Philip; actually he already knew what he would do.)

Philip answered, “For everyone to have even a little, it would take more than two hundred silver coins to buy enough bread.” Another of his disciples, Andrew, who was Simon Peter’s brother, said, “There is a boy here who has five loaves of barley bread and two fish. They will certainly not be enough for all these people.”

“Make the people sit down,” Jesus told them. (There was a lot of grass there.) So all the people sat down; there were about 5,000 men. Jesus took the bread, gave thanks to God, and distributed it to the people who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish, and they all had as much as they wanted. When they were all full, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces left over; let us not waste any.”

46

So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with the pieces left over from the five barley loaves which the people had eaten. Seeing this miracle that Jesus had performed, the people there said, “Surely this is the Prophet who was to come into the world!”



Jesus knew that they were about to come and seize him in order to make him king by force; so he went off again to the hills by himself.



Other Readings

2 Kings 4:42-44

Psalms 145:10-11, 15-18

Ephesians 4:1-6



LECTIO

John narrates this episode with relish. It's clear that the disciples are not expecting a miraculous event. **Philip** can't see past the great cost – around **eight month's salary**. **Andrew** only sees as far as the boy's **loaves and fishes**.

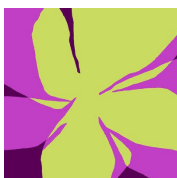
Jesus saw no problem; He already knew how this need would be met. He **accepts the boy's loaves and fishes and miraculously multiplies them**, feeding everyone fully. There are even twelve baskets of leftovers!

What is the meaning of this miracle? We could stop at the literal meaning but if we continue reading the rest of chapter 6, we see John brings an additional dimension. John develops the theme of food. He uses it as a metaphor or word picture. **Jesus** is presented as **'the bread of life'**, bread which sustains life, especially **spiritual life** (verses 27-36).

Bread has a double meaning here: it is the **teachings of Jesus** and it is **Jesus himself**. His description of himself and his nature is what we are to 'feed on' or draw strength from.

Jesus himself draws the parallel between meeting **people's physical needs** and meeting **their spiritual needs** (verses 26-27). To benefit from this spiritual nourishment we must do something too – **believe in Jesus** (verse 29).

His teaching is perfect nourishment for anyone who will base their life on it and, in this case, every piece is valuable.



MEDITATIO



- ❓ **What lessons** do you think Jesus wanted to teach his disciples through this miracle? **How can we learn from this too?**
- ❓ How do you 'feed' on Jesus and on his words? Most people see the importance of physical food. **Consider whether you give enough priority to your spiritual diet.**



ORATIO

Psalm 145 gives praise to God for his care of all his creatures. Verses 15-16 speak of ‘food’ being supplied when needed. **Think of a time when a verse of Scripture has given you strength to keep going.**

Thank God for the different ways he has helped and provided for you at specific times in your life. **Let these prayers, and the words of this Psalm, build faith and confidence for the future.**



CONTEMPLATIO

When the crowd witnessed Jesus multiplying the food they said ‘this is the prophet’. Perhaps they made the connection with a similar miracle in 2 Kings 4:42-44 when Elisha fed a hundred prophets by multiplying 20 loaves.

In Ephesians 4:1-6, Paul reminds us that Christians are one body in and with Jesus. This means we share **a common hope which is salvation.**

We also have ‘one Lord of all, who works through all, and is in all’.
So we can all be included in this promise.



MAGDALENE of CANOSSA

*The Eucharist as the place where
Jesus Crucified reveals his Love in the Church.*

48



The Eucharist has the most outstanding place in the charismatic experience of Magdalene. It is the spiritual “climate” which permeates her entire life journey.

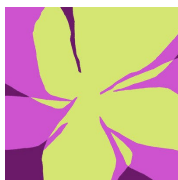
From the **Eucharist**, she draws “**deep peace, joy, the desire for heaven; but at the same time, the desire to work much.**” The reason for this is “**the love which the Lord manifested for his people, in the act of instituting the Holy Eucharist.**”
(M. III, 45-46)

In the celebration of the Eucharist, Magdalene perceives the constant **availability of the love of Jesus Crucified** and finds the grace to live this love through **generous service** to those who have not known this love.

In a very special way, the Eucharist reminds her of **the moment** and the **way** in which the Lord has entrusted us with his commandment of love.

The **Last Supper** and the handing on of “his” commandment to the disciples are so closely linked together that they can be experienced as **effective union of hearts** and sharing. In turn, the close connection between the Last Supper and the Passion of the Lord underscores the absolutely unconditional and immeasurable nature of his love.

“Having read something about the Last Supper and especially of the love which the Lord manifested for his people, the act of instituting the Holy Eucharist ... made me enter into myself to the point that I became recollected ...; **this insight into the love of Jesus for men and women ... gave me a great longing to make Him known and loved**”. (M. III, 46-49)



Attitudes

The decision of faith and its consequences call for and nurture **coherent attitudes**, like **listening**, **interiorising the Word**, the **understanding of signs**, the **cordial and humble acceptance** of fraternal service. These attitudes make it possible for the decision of faith to become **fidelity**, **perseverance** and **trustful surrender** to the Lord.

Without these attitudes both the decision and the consequences of faith will lack the elements to foster their growth. At the same time, without the act of decision, the consequences risk becoming mere intellectual concepts. Similarly, perseverance without caring for the consequences may be reduced to mere devotion.

Jesus is not Loved,
because He is not Known.

Magdalene of Canossa



Good Shepherd



John 10:11-18

I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. When the hired man, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and does not care about the sheep. **I am the good shepherd.** As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them. There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again. **No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will.** I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do.



Other Readings

Acts 4:8-12

Psalms 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28-29

1 John 3:1-2

50





LECTIO

The imagery of the shepherd was a familiar one in Jewish culture. Political as well as religious leaders were often called ‘shepherds’ (see Ezekiel 34) and the metaphor is applied to the Lord himself in the well-loved words of Psalm 23.

The importance of being a leader for the sheep tended to be emphasised in the Old Testament texts. John, by contrast, focuses on the **deep relationship between the shepherd and his sheep**. Jesus therefore transforms a well-known metaphor to highlight that He is more than a leader of his disciples. His sheep recognise his voice and follow him. **The shepherd knows his sheep**, calls them by name and knows their needs.

One important difference between Psalm 23 and John 10 is that in John’s Gospel Jesus speaks of himself as the shepherd. In Psalm 23 the poet King David applies the metaphor prophetically to the Lord, ‘The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need.’ Jesus and the psalmist agree about the nature of the shepherd Lord. Jesus adds that he will give his own life for his sheep. He will **satisfy all the spiritual needs of his faithful ones**. All they need to do is to listen to his voice and follow wherever he leads.

Jesus, the good shepherd, includes the sheep that are not yet part of his flock. They too are included in the promise he is making.

In verse 18 Jesus makes it very clear that he chooses to give up his life. The Roman and Jewish authorities thought they were in control, but it was Jesus who was in absolute control, even on the cross.



MEDITATIO

- How does Jesus distinguish himself from the shepherds who are not ‘good’?
- How does the good shepherd provide security for his sheep?
- Who is Jesus thinking of when he speaks of the wolves from whom he will defend his sheep (see also Matthew 15: 16)?
- How would Jesus ultimately defend his sheep?



ORATIO

The clatter of thoughts in our heads can destroy the quiet voice of God. **Ask Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit**, to help you recognise his voice when he speaks to you.

Thank Him for the opportunity of being able to immerge self in his words of Scripture so that one may recognise the way he speaks.

Thank Him too for being the cornerstone of the Church and of our lives as Christians. (Psalm 118:22)



CONTEMPLATIO

The other readings confirm the gospel reading. In his speech before the Jewish religious leaders, Peter insists that salvation only comes through Jesus. (Acts 4:8-12)

In 1 John 3:1-2 we learn that **God's love for us is so great that he made us his children.**

We are moving towards the return of Jesus. Then we shall see the 'good shepherd' as He really is.



Magdalene of Canossa

The ministerial nature of universal and integral Charity

From the very beginning, the ministerial nature of charity as a response to the conditions of human life, has been an essential element of Magdalene's charism. The concrete needs of the poor have always determined the works of charity. According to the charism of Magdalene, the love of the Lord has certainly aroused a sense of gratitude and wonder in contemplation, but always in such a way as to the point to some action inspired by charity. As she herself states, it means to **"imitate our Divine Saviour in carrying out the second commandment of charity"**.

In doing so, there is a conscious acceptance of suffering as a sign of the struggle against evil. The effort and commitment required for this can be seen in the Cross that the Lord carried.

The **"torcular calcavi solus"** (Isaiah 63:3; Rev 19:15) clearly evokes the determination and dedication with which the Lord fights against evil. Closely linked to the fight against evil is **the attitude and the style of humble service**, which adapts to the state of those being served with the **aim of promoting their growth** so that they may find their place in society and in the Church community, reflecting their rightful positions in God's plan for them.



The following **three branches or ministries of charity** form the permanent and stable expressions of the charism:

- **education** = the redemption and promotion from a state of poverty
- **evangelization** = revelation of the source and focal point of the dignity of the human person
- **assistance** = witness and proclamation that human weakness is not a sign of abandonment by God nor the end of life.

The ministerial nature of charity, which Magdalene intended to flow from the love of Jesus Crucified, includes the aspect of missionary openness to the whole world and to the place where the Lord is not known and where the human person is not the object of his love:

*"I wish I could be reduced to dust if,
in that way,
I could be scattered to all parts of the world
so that God would be known and loved"*

Magdalene of Canossa





The Great Commission



Matthew 28:16-20

The Eleven went to the hill in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. **When they saw Him, they worshipped Him**, even though some of them doubted. Jesus drew near and said to them,

**“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.
Go, then, to all peoples everywhere
and make them my disciples:
baptize them
in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.
And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.”**



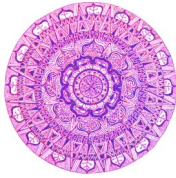
Other Readings

Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

Psalms 33:4-6, 9, 18-20, 22

Romans 8:14-17





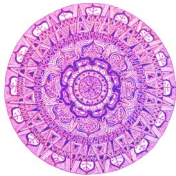
LECTIO

Matthew's Gospel concludes with a final face-to-face meeting between Jesus and his disciples. Once again the disciples could see Jesus, but not everyone could believe their eyes. From now on Jesus will continue to be with his disciples but they will not be able to see him anymore. In today's reading **Jesus gives** his disciples a very important commission that has come to be known as **'The Great Commission'**.

They are to go to people of all nations, **tell them the Gospel** and make them **Jesus' disciples** and part of the Christian community by **baptising them**. Jesus gives them specific instructions. Firstly, they are to baptise people in the name of the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus teaches his followers to see **God as Three Persons in One** and to love and serve one another in the same way the members of the Trinity do. Secondly, they are to **teach the new disciples to obey** all the commandments Jesus gave them. Finally, Jesus leaves the disciples with a tremendous promise which remains as true for us today as it was for the very first disciples, **'I will be with you always'**. (verse 20)

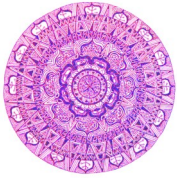
The invisible presence of the Risen Lord in our midst is the mystery of the Christian community. It is Jesus, living in his disciples, who attracts new believers and helps them grow. **His number one rule remains 'love one another'**. (John 15:12)



MEDITATIO

- 2 Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. (verse 18) Ultimately God is therefore in control of everything. **How might this influence our thinking and prayer?**
- 2 Consider some of Jesus' teaching and commandments. **To what extent are you obeying them?** James warns us not to be deceived 'by just listening to his Word, instead of putting it into practice'. (James 1:22)
- 2 Jesus promises us he will be always with us. **What does this mean to you personally?**
- 2 Consider the love and service that exists between the members of the Godhead. Jesus wants us to follow this example in our relationships with each other.





ORATIO

Psalm 33 speaks of creation, God's everlasting promises and his protection. God's promises are worth remembering because they give us strength and hope. **As you pray have your Bible open, take a pencil and write a 'P' in the margin** beside Matthew 28:20 and Psalm 33:20.

Thank God for his promises to you, the Bible is full of them. During the day try and bring those verses back to mind, as you learn them and apply them they will become a reality in your life. You'll find many more promises so keep your pencil handy.



CONTEMPLATIO

There is an on-going theme today: **everlasting care and protection**. In Deuteronomy 4, Moses reminds the Israelites of God's love and provision throughout their history, just before he reveals the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5).

In Romans 8:14-17 Paul emphasises that **those whom God guides by his Spirit are His children**.



Magdalene of Canossa

56



*Charity according to the mind of Jesus Crucified
shapes the fraternity of the community*

Fraternal relationships flow from a **love that is unconditional** and **capable** of healing wounds, a **love contemplated** in Jesus Crucified, celebrated in the Eucharist and fully incarnated by Mary, Mother of Charity.

The strength of such relationships is proved in daily life and in the way of facing the trials of the apostolate, when we are **deeply rooted in the interior life**, that is, when the love of the Lord is the source and the rule of our life.

We come to fraternal relationships to be generated and re-generated by the daily, constant process of forgiveness and reconciliation, as:

*"It is also laid down that,
should anyone fail in charity towards someone,
she/he must ask forgiveness and be reconciled with the
other at least before going to bed."*

Magdalene of Canossa

Thus, **fraternal relationships** may be perceived as the first way in which the twofold commandment of love, contemplated in Jesus Crucified, is fulfilled. It is the indispensable condition for effectively preserving in charity as the inspiration for all our activities, without which we are in danger of becoming "phantoms of charity."

* In the Christian Tradition, **fraternity** consists in **sharing**, in **mutually living the values of the Gospel** and seeking together to **do the Will of the Father**. This takes place when each one allows one's humanity to be purified and enriched by the values of the Gospel.

* **Fraternity** also gives all of us the opportunity to **help one another**, to be **open to the Gospel**. Family, Community, Association, with their variety of rhythms and means to reach this aim, are part of this mutual help that we receive. They are **laboratories of fraternity** and thus become also a **sign**.



Lonely Voices

*Oh that I was an angel, I would sing to my God
But look at what I have: a human body, not an angel!*

*Here I am in the world, singing songs of sorrow
Lonely voices join with me
In honesty we've seen what's mean.*

*Now that I am a Sudanese, who will hear me in this mess?
I am one lonely voice
One of many lonely voices!*

*As an African, voices come and go at will,
In my dreams I see faces and hear them talk
All of them mutter to themselves!*

*Lonely voices in our streets. Oh! Who hears us when we sigh?
Who hears when we cry out every moment, in loneliness?
Lonely voices around us, unheard
Ears are blocked, hearts closed.
Oh! God, why is man not angelic?
Why? Do you like the lonely voices?*

*Now that I am human, more than that a Sudanese,
I hear myself mumbling, humming
A song, alone, with this lonely voice.*

*In Africa a voice is power:
The voices of the poor are never heard, never respected
Rich ones have the voice, and respected.*

*In Sudan, the land of free birds
Chirping and singing is heard.
The voices of the women and children,
Lonely as usual, none is heard.*

*Oh that I was an angel, I would catch these voices,
In fair glamour deliver solace and peace without vices.*

*Keep calling, yowl, lonely voices,
Yonder comes the time, without vices,
When these voices will never sound
Lonely, derelict or hoarse.*

Another Song, Abe Enosa

