



*Light and  
Love in the  
darkness*

## CELEBRATING AT HOME LECTIO DIVINA FOR 6th SUNDAY OF EASTER

### *Promise of the Spirit Commanded to be Love (Jn14:1-12)*

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 6th SUNDAY OF EASTER

### Prayer

Father, Christ your Son is already pleading for us, but through your Word, which is life for us, you also grant us the grace of opening our hearts to you in deep, intense, true and enlightened prayer. Send us the Consoler, the Spirit of truth, not only that he may dwell beside us, but that he may always dwell within our hearts. He is the fire of love that unites you with Jesus, the kiss that you exchange always. Grant that, through your Word, we too may enter into this love and live by it. Touch our spirit, our mind and all our being that we may welcome the commandments, hidden in these few verses; that we may keep them, that is, live them fully and in truth in your presence and that of our brothers and sisters. Amen.

### A key to the reading

#### *a) To place the passage in its context*

These verses lead us to the holy place where Jesus celebrates the last supper with his disciples: the place of his revelation, of his glory, of his teaching and of his love. Here, we too are invited to sit at table with Jesus, to lean on his chest, receive his commandment and thus prepare ourselves to enter with Him into his Passion and resurrection. After the passage of 13: 1-30, which tells us of the actions, words and feelings of Jesus and of those with him during the paschal meal, in 13: 31 we hear the words of the great last discourse of Jesus, which ends with the priestly prayer of chapter 17. Here, then, we are still at the beginning. In 14: 1-14 Jesus presented and offered himself as the way to the Father, whereas in these few verses he introduces the promise to send the Holy Spirit, as Consoler, as sure presence, but also the promise of the coming of the Father and of himself in the depths of the disciples who, through faith, will have believed in him and kept his commandments.

#### *b) To help us in the reading of the passage*

*vv. 15-17* First, Jesus clarifies to his disciples that for him, love, if it is to be true love, must absolutely mean also the observance of his commandments. In brief, he wants to tell us that if we do not keep the commandments then there is no love; this is an essential and indispensable consequence, which reveals whether we really do love or only deceive ourselves that we

love. Jesus also says that the gift of the Holy Spirit from the Father is the fruit of this love and observance that give rise to the prayer of Jesus, thanks to which we can receive the Spirit. Jesus explains that the Spirit is the Consoler, the Spirit of truth, the One whom the world does not see, does not know, but whom the disciples will see and know, the One who dwells with them and in them.

*vv. 18-20* Jesus promises his coming, his return, which is about to happen in his resurrection. He says that he will no longer appear in his passion, death and burial, but that he will reappear to his disciples, who will see him, because he is the resurrection and the life. He also reveals his relationship with the Father and invites them and us into that relationship; in fact, he says that we shall know, that is we shall experience this relationship in our depths. Jesus and no one else could ever promise a greater consolation than this.

*v. 21* Here Jesus' discourse includes everyone; he moves from the "you" of his disciples to the "anyone" who begins to love him, enter into a relationship with him and follow him. That which took place for the disciples, the first chosen ones, takes place for anyone who believes in him. Here Jesus opens to us and to all his relationship of love with the Father, because by remaining in Christ, we too are known and loved by the Father. Finally, Jesus promises again his love for anyone who loves him and the revelation of himself, that is, a permanent manifestation of his love for us.

### Read (John 14:15-21)

15 If you love me you will keep my commandments.  
16 I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you for ever, 17 the Spirit of truth whom the world can never accept since it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he is with you, he is in you. 18 I shall not leave you orphans; I shall come to you. 19 In a short time the world will no longer see me; but you will see that I live and you also will live. 20 On that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you. 21 Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me; and whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and reveal myself to him.'

## Reflect

A few questions to help in our meditation

- This passage begins and ends with the same words: the proclamation and invitation to love the Lord. I know that, through this *lectio divina*, he wants to prepare me for a powerful meeting with love; perhaps I am frightened a little, I know that I am not used to this, perhaps I am ashamed, perhaps I feel superior towards these sugary words. But he insists and keeps on repeating only this, only Love. So what am I going to do? Am I going to stay and enter into this relationship, so involved, so upsetting? Or shall I go away, run away, because I am afraid, because I don't feel like committing myself? Shall I choose Love, that is, this relationship, this confrontation, this exchange, this reciprocal giving, this giving of myself? Or shall I choose to be closed, remain alone in an absurd isolation of one who does not want to stay with his God and with his equals? Jesus says: "If you want"; He does not force. However, I know that he is waiting for me and has been so for a long time... why wait any longer?
- I read and read again this passage, so that these words, so full of meaning, may be better imprinted on my mind and descend into my heart. I note that Jesus insistently says "you", when referring to his disciples, those then with him but also those of today, that is us, each one of us seen and looked at by Him with a unique, personal, unrepeatable love that cannot be given away or substituted. I know that I too am included in that "you", which seems generic but is not. I try to read again Jesus' words and allow myself to be involved more directly; I place myself face to face, eyes to eyes with Jesus and let him tell me all, using that "you" full of love, using my name that only he really knows.... If you love me, my Father will send you another Consoler; you know him; he dwells near you and will be within you; I shall not leave you an orphan, I shall come back to you; you will see me; you will live; you will know that I am in the Father and you in me and I in you.
- Now we meet an important expression of Jesus, repeated twice: "keep my commandments". This is an important and fundamental fact, because the authenticity of my love relationship with the Lord depends on it; if I do not keep his commandments, then I do not love him. But I try to ask myself more carefully what does the verb "keep" mean, which looks so cold, so distant. I find it for instance in Mt 27: 36, where we read that the soldiers kept watch over the crucified Jesus; it is then a matter of close

and scrupulous watching, an untiring watchfulness. On the other hand in Jn 2: 10, it appears with the meaning of keeping in store, reserving, as Jesus says of the good wine kept until last. 2 Timothy 4: 7 uses the verb in that wonderful verse on faith: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith". This emphasises the effort, the great care used to safeguard and watch over that precious thing, faith. In Jn 17: 15, Jesus prays the Father to keep his own from the evil one, that is to preserve, protect, so that nothing and no one would harm or disperse them. This is not simply a cold and external keeping of the commandments of God or of Jesus, but much more; this is a relationship of love, a being careful, protecting, keeping in life. Fundamentally it is realising that which I am told or asked, in my day to day life, every moment and in every situation.

## Comment

**The following are the people I meet in the passage:** the Father, Jesus, the Spirit, the disciples, the world.

**The Father.** The presence of the Father immediately appears as the point of reference of Jesus, the Son. It is to the Father that he addresses his prayer. He says: "I will ask the Father". It is this very special and intimate contact that makes of Jesus the Son of his Father, that confirms him all the time as such. The relationship of love with the Father is nourished and maintained by prayer at night, at different times during the day, in times of need, in requests for help, in suffering, in the most distressing trials. If we scan the Gospels several times, we shall find Jesus thus, deeply involved in a relationship with the Father through prayer. Here are some relevant passages: Mt 6: 9; 11, 25; 14:23; 26: 39; 27: 46; Lk 21: 21ff; 6:12; 10: 21; 22: 42; 23: 34. 46; Jn 11: 41ff; 17: 1. I feel that this is also the way for me; Jesus followed this way in depth, leaving me his enlightened and certain footsteps so that I may have no fear in following him in a similar experience. I too am the child of the Father, I too can pray to him.

Immediately after this, Jesus shows us the Father as the One who gives. In fact, giving is the main characteristic of God, who is uninterrupted, measureless and countless gift to all and at all times. The Father is Love and Love gives itself, gives everything. It is not enough that he gave us Jesus, his beloved Son, he still wants to bless us with and offer us life by sending the Holy Spirit. Indeed it is written: "He who has not spared even his own Son but has delivered him for us all, how can he fail to grant us also all things with him?" (Rm 8: 32). Still more: the Father loves us (Jn 14: 23; 16: 27)! And

this love of his allows us to pass from death to life, from the sadness of sin to the joy of communion with Him, from the solitude of hatred to sharing, because the love of God inevitably takes us to the love of our brothers and sisters.

**Jesus the Son.** In these few verses, the figure and presence of Jesus appear forcefully and with enormous clarity. He is immediately seen as praying, the one who prays to the Father for us; he raises his hands in prayer for us, just as he raises them in oblation on the cross.

Jesus is the one who does not go away for ever, who does not leave us orphans, but who will come back: "I shall come back". If it seems as though he is absent, I must not despair, but go on believing in him because he will really come back. "It is true, I come quickly!" (Ap 22: 20). He will come back and, as he said, he will take us with him so that we may be where he is (Jn 14: 3).

Jesus is the living one forever, the conqueror of death. He is in the Father and in us, with an all-powerful force that nothing can ever destroy. He is in the Father, but also in us, he dwells in us, he stays with us; there is no possibility of true and full life for us other than that con-penetration of being which Jesus offers us. He says yes, always, and is never sorry for, nor does he ever withdraw from his commitment of love.

On the contrary! He loves us, as the Father loves us and reveals himself to us. He gives himself, offers himself, allowing us to know him, to experience him, to touch and taste him. But this is a revelation that is accompanied by love, as Paul says (2 Tim 4: 8).

**The Holy Spirit.** In this passage the Spirit of the Lord seems to be an emerging figure that embraces everything. He unites the Father to the Son, he brings the Father and the Son into the hearts of the disciples; he creates an indissoluble union of love, of being. He is called the Paraclete, that is the Consoler, the one who stays with us always, who will not leave us alone, abandoned, forgotten; he comes and gathers us from the four winds, from the dispersion and blows within us the strength for our return to the Father, to Love. Only he can work all this within us; he is the finger of God's hand who, to this day, writes on the sand of our hearts the words of a new covenant, which can never again be forgotten.

He is the Spirit of truth, that is, of Jesus; in him there is no deceit, no falsehood, only the certain light of the Word of the Lord. He has built his dwelling place within us; he has been invited and goes from being close to us to being within us. He has become one with

us, accepting this nuptial union, this fusion; he is all good, the friend of men and women, he is Love itself. That is why he gives himself thus, filling us with joy. Let us beware of making him sad, of sending him away, of substituting his presence with other presences, other covenants of love; we then would be the ones who would die, because no one could ever console us in his place.

**The Disciples.** The words Jesus addresses to his disciples are words that challenge me more directly, more forcefully; they are addressed to me, they impinge on my day to day life, they touch my heart, my thoughts, my most intimate desires. They challenge me to a true love that I must transform into concrete actions, keeping in mind the Word and the wish of the one I claim to love, the Lord. A love that can be verified by my observance of the commandments. The disciple, then, here appears as one who knows how to wait for his Lord on his return; at midnight, at cockcrow, or early in the morning? It does not matter; He will come back and so I must wait and be ready. What kind of love is it that will not wait, that will not watch, not protect?

The disciple is also one who knows; this is a knowledge given from above and which takes place in the heart, that is in one's most intimate being and personality, where we make decisions to act, where we comprehend reality, formulate our thoughts, see and love. This is knowledge in the biblical sense, born of a strong, long and intimate experience, from a deep union and from reciprocal giving. This happens between the Spirit and the true disciple of Jesus. An unstoppable ever expanding knowledge that leads us to Christ, to the Father, and places us within their eternal and infinite communion of love: "You will know that I am in the Father and you in me and I in you". The disciple is also someone who lives, who is in, that is within, in an unbreakable union with his Lord; it is not a superficial, distant, spasmodic union, but is always within the relationship of love. The disciple goes willingly, goes and comes back, allows him/herself to be held, entertained. And so realises the word of the Gospel: "Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father".

The disciple of Jesus, in fact, is one who is loved, one chosen, from the beginning and forever.

**The World.** The passage says little about the world, which we know to be very important in the writings of John: the world cannot receive the Spirit, because it cannot see or know him. The world is immersed in darkness and error; it does not see or know and

cannot experience the love of God. The world stays at a distance, turns its back, closes itself and goes away. The world repays with hatred the love that the Lord has for it: the Father has so loved the world that he gave his only Son. Perhaps we too must also love the world, created by God; love it by uniting ourselves to the offering, the sacrifice of Jesus for it.

Could it not be precisely thus, in Christ's offering, that we come to our full and brilliant truth as children of the Father, as disciples, as lovers? Is not this the end of this lectio divina, of this meeting with Christ, with the Father and the Spirit? Maybe it is really thus; we must come to the fullness of love, which is the keeping of the commandments and especially the one commandment of Jesus: love as I have loved you.

## Prayer

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.  
In grassy meadows he lets me lie.  
By tranquil streams he leads me  
to restore my spirit.  
He guides me in paths of saving justice  
as befits his name.

Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death  
I should fear no danger,  
for you are at my side.  
Your staff and your crook are there to soothe me.

You prepare a table for me  
under the eyes of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup brims over.

Kindness and faithful love pursue me  
every day of my life.  
I make my home in the house of the Lord  
for all time to come.

## Final Prayer

Lord, you fill me with your love; I abound with joy and deep peace. Through your Word, you have loved me much during this meeting. You have given yourself to me fully; you have neglected nothing in me, my person, my whole life history. Lord, I am because you are; you are with me, within me. Today you have given me a new birth from above, you have renewed me; I know, I see, I feel your own life in me. This is a real Pasch, a true passing from death to life. Thank you, Lord, for your inexpressible love, which covers me, overpowers me and yet relieves and uplifts me!

Lord, I leave behind here my empty, useless, incapable jar and run into the city to call my friends, those whom you love, to tell them: Come you too that you may know Love! Lord, one final thing: let me never betray you. If Love is not freely given, shared, then it fades into the distance, disappears, becomes sick and lonely. Please help me that I may be love.

Lectio Divina for every day of each month can be found on our website at [www.carmelites.org.au/lectiodivina](http://www.carmelites.org.au/lectiodivina).

It is available in PDF format and for your iPhone and iPad and your Kindle device.