



*Light and
Love in the
darkness*

CELEBRATING AT HOME LECTIO DIVINA FOR TRINITY SUNDAY

God enfleshed in us (Jn 3:16-18)

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 TRINITY SUNDAY

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.

You 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

These few verses are part of a reflection of John the evangelist (Jn 3: 6-21), where he explains to his community of the end of the first century, the meaning of the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-15). In this dialogue, Nicodemus finds it difficult to follow Jesus' thinking. The same happened to the communities. Some of them, still under the influence of the criteria of the past, could not understand the newness that Jesus brought. Our text (Jn 3:16-18) is an attempt to overcome this difficulty.

The Church too has chosen these three verses for the feast of the Blessed Trinity. In fact, they are an important key that reveals the importance of the mystery of the Triune God in our lives. When reading, let us try to keep in mind and in our hearts that in this text God is the Father, the Son is Jesus and love is the Holy Spirit.

So, let us not try to penetrate the mystery. Let us halt in silence and in wonder! Jesus which he pronounces with such solemnity.

A division of the text to help with the reading

Jn 3:16: Says that the love of God that saves manifests itself in the gift of the Son.

Jn 3:17: The will of God is to save, not to condemn.

Jn 3:18: God asks of us that we have the courage to believe in this love.

Read (John 3:16-18)

16 Jesus said to Nicodemus,
'God loved the world so much
that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost
but may have eternal life.

17 For God sent his Son into the world
not to condemn the world,
but so that through him the world might be saved.

18 No one who believes in him will be condemned;
but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already,
because he has refused to believe
in the name of God's only Son.

Reflect

A few questions to help in our meditation

- What pleased or touched you most?
- After a careful examination of this brief text, what are the recurring key words?
- What is the central experience of the community by the evangelist that reveals itself in the text?
- What does the text tell us about the love of God?
- What does the text tell us about Jesus?
- What does the text tell us about the world?
- What does the text reveal to me?

Comment

The context within which the words of Jesus appear in the Gospel of John

Nicodemus was a doctor who thought he knew the things of God. He watches Jesus with the book of the Law of Moses in his hand to see whether the new things announced by Jesus were in accordance with the book. In the conversation, Jesus points out to Nicodemus (and to all of us) that the only way one can understand the things of God is to be born again! The same thing happens today. Often, we are like Nicodemus: we accept only those things that agree with our ideas. We reject all else, thinking it contrary to tradition. But not all are like this. There are those who allow themselves to be surprised by events and who are not afraid of saying to themselves, "Be born again!"

When recalling the words of Jesus, the evangelist has before his eyes the situation of the community towards the end of the first century, and it is for them that he writes. Nicodemus' doubts were also those of the community. Thus Jesus' reply was also a reply to the community. Quite probably, the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus was part of the baptismal catechesis, because the text says that people have to be reborn of water and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:6). In the brief commentary that follows, we focus on the key words that appear in the text and that are central to the Gospel of John. They serve as key words for the reading of the whole Gospel.

Commentary on the text of John 20:19-23

John 3:16: To love is to give oneself for the sake of love. The word love, first of all, points to a deep experience in the relationship between persons. It includes feelings and values such as joy, sorrow, suffering, growth, giving up, giving oneself, realization, gift, commitment, life, death, etc. In the Old Testament these values and feelings are summarized in the word *hesed*, which, in our Bibles, is usually translated as charity, mercy, fidelity or love. In the New Testament, Jesus revealed this love of God in his meetings with people. He revealed this through feelings of friendship, kindness, as, for example, in his relationship with Martha's family in Bethany: "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus". He weeps at Lazarus' tomb (Jn 11:5, 33-36). Jesus faces his mission as a manifestation of love: "having loved His own...he loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1). In this love, Jesus reveals his deep identity with the Father: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you!" (Jn 15:9). He also says to us, "Love one another as I have loved you!" (Jn 15:12). John defines love this way: "This has taught us love – that he gave up his life for us; and we, too, ought to give up our lives for our brothers" (1Jn 3:16). There was no other commandment apart from this for the community, "living the same kind of life as Jesus" (1Jn 2:6). Those who live love and reveal it in their words and attitudes, become Beloved Disciples.

John 3:17: He loved the world and gave his life to save the world. The word world is found 78 times in John's Gospel, but with different meanings. First, "world" may mean the earth, the space inhabited by human beings (Jn 11:9; 21:25) or the created universe (17:5, 24). In our text, "world" means those who inhabit this earth, the whole of humanity, loved by God, who gave his Son for its sake (cf. Jn 1:9; 4:42; 6:14; 8:12). It may also mean a large number of people, in the sense of "the whole world" (Jn 12:19; 14:27). But in John's Gospel the word

"world" means, above all, that part of humanity that is opposed to Jesus and so becomes his "adversary" or "opposition" (Jn 7:4,7; 8:23, 26; 9:39;12:25). This "world", contrary to the liberating practice of Jesus, is dominated by the Adversary, Satan, also is called "prince of the world" (14:30; 16:11), who persecutes and kills the communities of the faithful (16:33), creating injustice, oppression, kept up by those in authority, by those who rule the empire and the synagogue. They practice injustice in the name of God (16:2). The hope that John's Gospel offers to the communities is that Jesus will conquer the prince of this world (12:31). He is stronger than the "world". "In the world you will have trouble, but be brave: I have conquered the world" (16:33).

John 3:18: The Only Son of God who gives himself up for us: One of the most ancient and most beautiful titles that the first Christians chose to describe the mission of Jesus is that of Defender. In Hebrew it is *Goël*. This term used to indicate the closest relative, the oldest brother, who had to redeem his brothers who might be threatened with the loss of their properties (cf. Lev 25:23-55). At the time of the Babylonian exile, every one, including the closest relative, lost everything. Then God became the *Goël* of his people. He redeemed his people from slavery. In the NT, it is Jesus, the only son, the first-born, the closest relative, who became our *Goël*. This term or title is translated diversely as savior, redeemer, liberator, advocate, oldest brother, consoler, and so on (cf. Lk 2:11; Jn 4:42; Acts 5:31, etc.). Jesus takes on the defense and the redemption of his family, of His people. He gave himself entirely, completely, so that we, his brothers and sisters, may live again in fraternal love. This was the service he gave us. It was thus that the prophecy of Isaiah that announced the coming of the Servant Messiah was fulfilled. Jesus Himself said, "For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom (*goël*) for many!" (Mk 10:45). Paul expresses this discovery in the following sentence: "He loved me and sacrificed himself for me!" (Gal 2:20).

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.