



*Light and
Love in the
darkness*

CELEBRATING AT HOME LECTIO DIVINA FOR 15TH SUNDAY

Becoming good soil (Mt 13:1-9)

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 15TH SUNDAY

Prayer

Prayer is also the willingness to listen; it is the suitable time for meeting with God. Today, the Sunday of the 'sower', we would like to open our hearts to listen to the word of Jesus, using the words of St John Chrysostom that we too may become open and willing listeners of the saving Word:

Grant, Lord, that I may listen attentively and remember constantly your teaching, that I may put it into practice forcefully and courageously, despising riches and avoiding the worries of a worldly life... Grant me your strength and that I may meditate on your words putting down deep roots.

St John Chrysostom, A Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew 44:3-4.

A key to the reading

Matthew places the parable of the seed along with the events of the preceding chapters 11 and 12 where he mentions the kingdom of God that suffers violence.

The theme of our parable, as also of the whole of the discourse in parables in chapter 13, is the kingdom of God. The "house" from which Jesus leaves is the house where he lived in Capernaum and where he is once more with his disciples (v.1: That same day, Jesus left the house) and his leaving is connected with the going out of the sower (v.3: a sower went out to sow). His "leaving" has as its physical or concrete berth the shore of the lake (v.1: He got into a boat and sat there); this moment recalls the time when Jesus called his disciples (4:18), but, the sea is a place of passage to the pagan peoples. Thus, it represents the border between Israel and the pagan world. The background of the discourse in parables is, then, the lake of Genesareth, called a "sea" according to the people. His leaving attracts the crowds. And while Jesus is sitting by the shore of the sea, he is surprised by the crowds coming to him, and is obliged to get into a boat. This boat becomes the chair of his teaching. Jesus turns to his listeners and "told them many things in parables," that is, in a manner different from teaching or proclaiming.

Read (John 6:51-58)

Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, but such crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and

sat there. The people all stood on the beach, and he told them many things in parables.

He said, 'Imagine a sower going out to sow. As he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up straight away, because there was no depth of earth; but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away. Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Listen, anyone who has ears!'

Reflect

Spend a few moments in quiet reflection

Comment

The action of the sower

The parable speaks of a sower, not of a peasant, and his activity is marked by the contrast between the loss of the seeds (13:4-7) and the abundant fruit (13:8). Furthermore, we need to note the difference between the wealth of the description of those who lose the seeds and the concise form of the abundant fruit. But the number of failed and disappointing experiences represented by the various forms of loss of seeds (on the edge of the path...on patches of rock... among thorns...) is contrasted with the great harvest that makes us forget the negative experiences of the losses. Again, in the parable there is the time difference between the initial phase of the sowing and the end phase which coincides with the fruit of the harvest. If in the various attempts at sowing there is no fruit, such lack brings to mind the Kingdom of God at the time of the great harvest. Jesus, the sower, sows the word of the kingdom (13:19) which makes present the lordship of God over the world, over people and that bears the final fruit. The parable has such persuasive force as to bring the listener to trust in the works of Jesus, which, while marked by failure or disappointment, will finally succeed.

What can the parable say to the Church of today? Which soil does our ecclesial community represent? On the personal level, what interior availability and understanding do we manifest in our listening to the Word?

Is it not true that the dangers Jesus pointed out to his disciples concerning the welcoming of the Word are relevant to us, too, for instance, fickleness before difficulties, negligence, anxiety for the future, daily worries?

The disciples were capable of asking Jesus, of questioning him about their worries and difficulties. On your journey of faith to the Word of God, to whom do you address your questions? The replies that Jesus communicates to us in our intimate and personal relationship with Him depend on the sort of question we ask.

The figure of the sower recalls that of the Church in its commitment to evangelization: to know how to communicate in a new way the person of Jesus and the values of the Gospel. The Church has to stand out for the authoritative character of its teaching, for its outspokenness and for the force of its actions. Today we need to be confident, eager and tireless evangelizers. Every ecclesial community is urged by the parable of the sower not to be selective of persons or social contexts for the proclamation of the Gospel; we must have a broad vision and dedicate ourselves, even in what seem to be impossible situations, to communicating the Gospel. Every pastoral action of evangelization experiences a first moment of ephemeral enthusiasm, which, however, may be followed by a cold reaction and opposition. Pastoral attempts are comparable to the threefold attempt of the sower. In the end they are rewarded by the threefold harvest.

It is certain that the word of Jesus buds and bears fruit in hearts open to his action, but we must not cease from shaking our sluggishness, our indecision and the hardness of hearing of many believers.

Final Prayer

Lord, your parable of the sower concerns each one of us, the ways of our lives, the hardness of daily life, the difficulties and the moments of softness that are part of our interior scene.

We are all, from time to time, sometimes path, rocks and thorns; but also good, fertile soil. Deliver us from the temptation of negative forces that try to eliminate the force of your Word. Strengthen our will when passing and changing emotions render the seduction of your Word less efficacious. Help us to keep the joy that our meeting with your Word creates in our hearts. Strengthen our hearts so that in times of tribulation we may not feel defenseless and thus exposed to discouragement.

Grant us the strength to stand up to the obstacles we place to your Word when the worries of the world come or when we are deceived by the mirage of money, seduced by pleasure or by the vanity of appearances.

Make us good soil, welcoming persons, capable of rendering our service to your Word. Amen!