



*Light and  
Love in the  
darkness*

## CELEBRATING AT HOME LECTIO DIVINA FOR 18<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY

### *The Kingdom of God in everyday life (Mt 14:13-21)*

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 18TH SUNDAY

### Prayer

Come Holy Spirit  
Come Fire of love  
Come Father of the poor  
Come Healer of my soul.

### A key to the reading

All the Evangelists tell the story of the multiplication of the loaves. While Luke and John only tell us of one multiplication of loaves (Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-13), Mark and Matthew refer to two occasions of multiplication (Mk 6:30-44; 8:1-10; Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39). It seems that both stories in Matthew and Mark came from the one source when loaves were multiplied, but which was passed on in two versions according to different traditions. Besides, the story in Mt 14:13-21 and Mk 6:30-44 seem to be the older versions. Here we focus on the subject of our lectio divina, that is, the text of Mt 14:13-21.

### Read (Matthew 14:13-21)

When Jesus received the news of John the Baptist's death he withdrew by boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But the people heard of this and, leaving the towns, went after him on foot. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and took pity on them and healed their sick.

When evening came, the disciples went to him and said, 'This is a lonely place, and the time has slipped by; so send the people away, and they can go to the villages to buy themselves some food.' Jesus replied, 'There is no need for them to go: give them something to eat yourselves.' But they answered, 'All we have with us is five loaves and two fish.' 'Bring them to me,' he said. He gave orders that the people were to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. And breaking the loaves he handed them to his disciples who gave them to the crowds. They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected the scraps remaining, twelve baskets full. Those who ate numbered about five thousand men, to say nothing of women and children.

### Reflect

*Spend a few moments in quiet reflection*

### Comment

This text presents Jesus at the time when he received the news of the Baptist's beheading by Herod (Mt 14:12). He goes apart 'in a lonely place' (Mt 14:13). The Gospels often show us Jesus as someone who goes apart. Generally, but not always, this going apart presents a Jesus who is immersed in prayer. Here are some examples: 'After sending the people away, he went up a hill by himself to pray. When evening came, Jesus was there alone' (Mt 14:23); 'Very early in the morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of town to a lonely place, where he prays' (Mk 1:35); 'He would go away to lonely places, where he prayed' (Lk 5: 16); 'led by the Spirit' after his baptism, Jesus goes away into the desert to be tempted by the devil and he overcomes the devil's seductions by the power of the Word of God (Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13). At other times, Jesus calls his disciples to him: 'Let us go off by ourselves to someplace where we will be alone and you can rest a while' (Mk 6:30-44). In our passage, Jesus prays before multiplying the loaves. The Gospels show that Jesus liked to pray before important events throughout his ministry such at his baptism, his transfiguration and his passion.

This time the crowd follows him into the desert (Mt 14:13) and Jesus feels compassion for them and cures their sick (Mt 14:14). We often see compassion in Jesus towards those who follow him (Mt 15:32). The master is moved because they «were like sheep without a shepherd» (Mk 6:34). Indeed, Jesus is the good shepherd who nourishes his people like the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 4:1-7, 42-44) and like Moses in the desert (Ex 16; Nm 11). In John's Gospel, Jesus, in his discourse on the bread of life (Jn 6), explains the meaning of the sign of the multiplication of the loaves. This miracle is a preparation for the bread that will be given in the Eucharist. In all the Gospels, Jesus' actions before he multiplies the loaves, recall the rite of breaking the bread, the Eucharist. The actions are: a) taking the bread, b) lifting his eyes up to heaven, c) pronouncing the blessing, d) breaking the bread, e) giving it to the disciples (Mt 14:19). These actions are found in the stories of the multiplication of the loaves and, word for word, in the story of the last supper (Mt 26:26). All eat of the bread and are satisfied. Twelve baskets full of leftovers are taken up. Jesus is the one who satisfies the chosen people of God: Israel, made

up of twelve tribes. But he also satisfies the pagans in the second multiplication (Mt 15:32-39), symbolized now by seven baskets, the number of the nations of Canaan (Acts 13:19) and also the number of the Hellenist deacons (Acts 6:5; 21:8) who were given the task of providing for the daily distribution at table. The community gathered around Jesus, a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, welcomed Jews and Gentiles, all called to accept the invitation to share at the table of the Lord. Jesus shows this also by his action of sitting at table with publicans and sinners and, through his teachings in the parables of the banquet where «many will come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of heaven» (Mt 8: 11; see also Mt 22:34; Lk 14:16-24).

#### **Some questions to guide our meditation and practice**

- What touched you most in this passage?
- Which of Jesus' attitudes touched you most in this text?
- Have you ever thought of Jesus' emotions? This text focuses on compassion. Can you find other emotions in the Gospels?
- What do you think God wishes to tell you through this story of the multiplication of the loaves?
- Jesus provides food in abundance. Do you trust in the providence of the Lord? What does it mean for you to trust in providence?
- Have you ever thought of the Eucharist as sitting down at table with Jesus? Who are those invited to this table?

#### **Final Prayer**

O God,  
in the compassion of your Son towards us,  
you show us your fatherly goodness.  
Grant that the bread multiplied by your providence  
may be broken in love,  
and the communion in the bread come down from  
heaven may open us to dialogue with and service  
of our brothers and sisters.  
Through Christ our Lord.