



*Light and
Love in the
darkness*

CELEBRATING AT HOME LECTIO DIVINA FOR 21ST SUNDAY

*Who do you say I am?
(Mt 16:13-20)*

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 21ST SUNDAY

Prayer

Create silence in us so that we may listen to your voice in creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, may experience the force of your resurrection and witness to others that you are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of you, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed the Father to us and sent us your Spirit. Amen.

A key to the reading

In the Gospel of this Sunday, Jesus questions concerning who people think he is: "Who do people say that I am?" After learning the opinion of the people, He wants to know the opinion of his disciples. Peter, in the name of all, makes his profession of faith. Jesus confirms Peter's faith. In the course of the reading, let us pay attention to what follows: which type of confirmation does Jesus confer on Peter?

Read (Matthew 16:13-20)

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to the disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said, 'the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, Simon, son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.' Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Reflect

Spend a few moments in quiet reflection

Comment

Matthew 15:13-16: The opinions of the people and of the disciples concerning Jesus.

Jesus asks the opinion of the people and of his disciples concerning himself. The answers are quite varied: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the Prophets. When Jesus questions about the opinion of his own disciples, Peter becomes the spokesman and says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Peter's answer signifies that he recognizes in Jesus the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Old Testament and that in Jesus we have the definitive revelation of the Father for us. This confession of Peter is not new. First, after having walked on the water, the other disciples had already made the same profession of faith: "Truly you are the Son of God!" (Mt 14:33). In the Gospel of John, Martha makes this same profession of Peter: "You are the Christ, the Son of God who has come into the world" (Jn 11:27).

Matthew 16: 17: Jesus' reply to Peter: "Blessed are you, Peter!"

Jesus proclaims Peter as "Blessed!" because he has received a revelation from the Father. In this case also, Jesus' response is not new. First Jesus had made an identical proclamation of joy to the disciples for having seen and heard things which before nobody knew (Mt 13:16), and had praised the Father for having revealed the Son to little ones and not to the wise (Mt 11:25). Peter is one of these little ones to whom the Father reveals himself. The perception of the presence of God in Jesus does not come "from the flesh nor from the blood", that is, it is not the fruit of the merit of a human effort, but rather it is a gift which God grants to whom He wants.

Matthew 16:18-20: the attributions of Peter

Peter receives three attributions from Jesus: (i) To be a rock of support, (ii) to receive the keys of the Kingdom, and (iii) to be foundation of the Church.

i) To be Rock: Simon, the son of Jonah, receives from Jesus a new name which is Cephas, and that means Rock. This is why he is called Peter. Peter has to be Rock, that is, he has to be a sure foundation for the Church so that the gates of the underworld can never overpower it. With these words from Jesus to Peter, Matthew encourages the communities of Syria and

Palestine, which are suffering and are the victims of persecutions, to see in Peter a leader on whom to find support, to base themselves concerning their origin. In spite of being weak and persecuted communities, they had a secure basis, guaranteed by the word of Jesus. At that time, the communities had very strong affective bonds with the persons who had begun, who were at the origin of the community. Thus, the community of Syria and Palestine fostered their bond of union with the person of Peter, the community of Greece with the person of Paul, some communities of Asia with the person of the Beloved disciple and others with the person of John of the Apocalypse. Identifying themselves with these leaders of their origin helped the communities to foster their identity and spirituality better. But this could also be a cause of dispute, as in the case of the community of Corinth (1 Cor 1:11-12). To be rock as the basis of faith evokes the Word of God to the people who are in exile in Babylonia: "Listen to Me you who pursue saying injustice, you who seek Yahweh. Consider the rock from which you were hewn, the quarry from which you were dug. Consider Abraham your father, and Sarah who gave you birth; when I called him, he was the only one, but I blessed him and made him numerous" (Isa 51:1-2). Applied to Peter, this quality of peter-foundation indicates a new beginning of the people of God.

ii) The keys of the Kingdom: Peter receives the keys of the Kingdom to bind and to loosen, that is, to reconcile the persons among themselves and with God. Behold, that here again the same power to bind and to loosen, is given not only to Peter, but also to the other disciples (Jn 20:23) and to their own communities (Mt 18:18). One of the points on which the Gospel of Matthew insists more is reconciliation and forgiveness (Mt 5:7, 23-24, 38, 42-48; 6:14-15:35). In the years 80's and 90's, in Syria, because of faith in Jesus, there were many tensions in the communities and there were divisions in the families. Some accepted him as Messiah and others did not, and this was the cause for many tensions and conflicts. Matthew insists on reconciliation. Reconciliation was and continues to be one of the most important tasks of the coordinators of the communities at present. Imitating Peter, they have to bind and loosen, that is, do everything possible so that there be reconciliation, mutual acceptance, building up of the true fraternity "Seventy times seven!" (Mt 18:22).

iii) The Church: The word Church, in Greek *eklésia*, appears 105 times in the New Testament, almost exclusively in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Letters, only three times in the Gospels, and once only in the Gospel of Matthew. The word literally means "convoked" or "chosen". It indicates the people who get together convoked by the Word of God, and who seek to live the message of the Kingdom which Jesus came to bring to us. The Church or the community is not the Kingdom, but an instrument or an indication of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is much greater. In the Church, in the community, what happens when a human group allows God to reign and allows God to be 'Lord' in one's life, should be rendered present to the eyes of all.

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you 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 what your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word, you who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.