



*Light and  
Love in the  
darkness*

## CELEBRATING AT HOME LECTIO DIVINA FOR 22<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY

### *Finding real life* (Mt 16:21-27)

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 22<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY

### Prayer

Spirit of truth, sent by Jesus to guide us to the whole truth, enlighten our minds so that we may understand the Scriptures. You, who overshadowed Mary and made her fruitful ground where the Word of God could germinate, purify our hearts from all obstacles to the Word. Help us to learn like her to listen with good and pure hearts to the Word that God speaks to us in life and in Scripture, so that we may observe the Word and produce good fruit through our perseverance.

### A key to the reading

The Gospel of this Sunday is after Peter's profession of faith (16:13-20) and before the Transfiguration (17:1-8) and is strongly connected with these two events. Last Sunday Jesus asks the twelve to tell him who people say he is and then wants to know who the twelve say he is. Peter replies, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (16:16). Jesus not only accepts this profession of faith, but also explicitly says that it is God who has revealed his true identity to Peter. Yet he insists that the disciples must not tell anyone that he is the messiah. Jesus knows well that this title can be misunderstood and he does not want to run the risk. This Sunday's Gospel begins, "From that time" (16:21) he gradually begins to explain to the twelve what it means to be the messiah. He is the suffering messiah who will enter into his glory through the cross. The text we are considering is divided into two parts. In the first part (vv. 21-23), Jesus foretells his death and resurrection and shows that he is completely determined to follow God's plan for Him in spite of Peter's protestations. In the second part (vv. 24-27), Jesus shows the consequences of recognizing him as the suffering messiah for his disciples. No one can be his disciple unless he/she walks the same road.

### Read (Matthew 16:13-20)

Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. 'Heaven preserve you Lord,' he said. 'This must not happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's but man's.'

Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life?'

For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour.'

### Reflect

*Spend a few moments in quiet reflection*

### Comment

*"Destined to go to Jerusalem..."*

The four verbs "go", "suffer", "be put to death" and "be raised" (v. 21) are governed by the word "destined" or "had to". This is a verb which, in the New Testament, has a precise theological meaning. It denotes that it is the will of God that something happens because it is part of God's plan of salvation. The death of Jesus may be seen as the consequence of the "logic" of the attitude he took towards the institutions of his people. Like every uncomfortable prophet he was removed. But the New Testament insists that his death (and resurrection) are part of God's plan, which Jesus accepted freely.

*"You are an obstacle in my path"*

Obstacle means hold-up or trap. To be an obstacle means to confront someone with impediments that would divert that person from the way to follow. Peter is an obstacle for Jesus because he tries to swerve him from the way of obedience to the will of the Father in order to go an easier way. That is why Jesus compares him to Satan, who at the beginning of his ministry had sought to divert Jesus from the path of his mission, proposing an easy messianic mission (see Mt 4:1-11).

*"Anyone who loses his life... will find it"*

Anyone who understands well the mystery of Jesus and the nature of his mission also understands what it means to be his disciple. The two things are intimately linked. Jesus himself lays down three conditions for those who wish to be his disciples: renunciation of self, the taking up of one's cross and following him (v.24).

To renounce oneself means not to focus one's life on one's self but on God and on the plan of his Reign. This implies an acceptance of adversity and putting up with difficulties. Jesus himself left us his example of how to deal with such circumstances. It suffices to imitate him. He does not compromise his fidelity to the Father and to his Reign, and he remains faithful even to the point of giving his life. It was precisely thus that he came to the fullness of life in the resurrection.

## Final Prayer

O God, your ways are not our ways and your thoughts are not our thoughts. In your plan of salvation there is also room for the cross. Your Son, Jesus, did not retreat before the cross, but “endured the cross and disregarded the shamefulness of it” (Heb 12:2). The hostility of others could not distract him from his firm intent to fulfill your will and proclaim the Reign, cost what it may.

Strengthen us, Father, with the gift of your Spirit. May the Spirit enable us to follow Jesus resolutely and faithfully. May he make us his imitators in deed and make your Reign the center of our lives. May he give us strength to bear adversity and difficulties so that true life may blossom in us and in all humankind. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.