



*Light and
Love in the
darkness*

CELEBRATING AT HOME LECTIO DIVINA FOR 24TH SUNDAY

A family formed by forgiveness - part 2 (Mt 18:21-35)

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 24TH 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

In the Gospel of the 24th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Jesus tells us of the need to forgive our brothers and sisters. It is not easy to forgive. There are some offences and insults that go on hurting us. Some say: "I forgive, but not forget." I cannot forget! Resentment, tensions, different opinions, provocations make it difficult to forgive and be reconciled.

Why is it that forgiving is so difficult? Do I create a space in my family, my community, my work and my relationships for reconciliation and forgiveness? How? This is the third part of the "Sermon on the Community" (Mt 18:21-35), where Matthew puts together the sayings and parables of Jesus on limitless forgiveness. As you read, think of yourself and try to look back on your life.

Read (Matthew 18:15-20)

Peter went up to Jesus and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.'

And so the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; but he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt. At this, the servant threw himself down at his master's feet. "Give me time" he said "and I will pay the whole sum." And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt.

Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him. "Pay what you owe me," he said. His fellow servant fell at his feet and implored him, saying, "Give me time and I will pay you." But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt.

His fellow servants were deeply distressed when they saw what happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him. Then the master sent for him. "You wicked servant," he said, "I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?" And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.

Reflect

Spend a few moments in quiet reflection

Comment

Matthew 18:21: Peter's question: how many times forgive?
On hearing Jesus' words on reconciliation, Peter asks: "How often must I forgive? Seven times?" Seven is a number indicating perfection and, in the case of Peter's proposal, seven is synonymous with always.

Matthew 18:22: Jesus' reply: seventy times seven!
Jesus sees further. He eliminates any possible limitation to forgiveness: "Not seven, but seventy times seven!" Because there is no proportion between the forgiveness we receive from God and our forgiving our brother and sister. So as to make his reply to Peter clear, Jesus tells a parable. It is the parable of limitless forgiveness!

Matthew 18:23-26: The first part of the parable: the situation of the debtor

When he speaks of the King, Jesus is thinking of God. A servant owes the king ten thousand talents. That is, 164 tons of gold. The servant says he will pay. But even if he worked the whole of his life, he, his wife, his children and all his family, he would not be able to acquire 164

tons of gold to pay back the king. In other words, we shall never be in a position to pay back our debt with God. Impossible! (cf Psalm 49:8-9).

Matthew 18:27-30: The second part of the parable: The great contrast

At the servant's insistence, the king forgives him his debt of 164 tons of gold. A fellow servant owes him a hundred denarii, that is, 30 grams of gold. There is no comparison between the two debts! A grain of sand and a mountain! Before God's love that forgives freely our debt of 164 tons of gold, it is but just that we should forgive a debt of 30 grams of gold. But the forgiven servant would not forgive, not even at the insistence of the debtor. He behaves towards his fellow servant the way the king should have behaved towards him but did not: he ordered that he be thrown in jail until the debt of 30 grams of gold was paid! The contrast speaks for itself and needs no commentary!

Matthew 18:23-35: The third part of the parable: the moral of the story

The shameful attitude of the forgiven servant who will not forgive, strikes even his mates. They report him to the king and the king acts accordingly: he puts into motion the procedure of justice and the forgiven servant who in turn would not forgive, is thrown into jail, where he will stay until his debt is paid! He should be still there today! Because he will never be able to pay 164 tons of gold! The moral of the parable: "This is how my Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart!" The only limit to the free mercy of God who always forgives us is our refusal to forgive the brother and sister! (Mt 18:34; 6:12.15; Lk 23:34).

Final 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.