



*Light and  
Love in the  
darkness*

## CELEBRATING AT HOME LECTIO DIVINA 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Prepare a way!*  
(Mark 1:1-8)

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 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### Prayer

Father in heaven, our hearts desire the warmth of your love and our minds are searching for the light of your Word. Increase our longing for Christ our Saviour and give us the strength to grow in love, that the dawn of his coming may find us rejoicing in his presence and welcoming the light of his truth. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### A key to the reading

The literary purpose of Mark 1:1-13, of which our text is a part (Mk 1:1-8), is a short introduction to the proclamation of the Good News of God. There are three main points: (i) The Good News is prepared by the events of John the Baptist (Mk 1:2-8), (ii) it is proclaimed on the occasion of the baptism of Jesus (Mk 1:9-11), and (iii) it is tested at the time of the temptations of Jesus in the desert (Mk 1:12-13).

In the 70's, the time when Mark was writing his Gospel, the communities were living through difficult times. They were persecuted from outside by the Roman Empire. From inside, they lived with doubts and tensions. Some groups said that John the Baptist was equal to Jesus (Acts 18:26, 19:3). Others wanted to know how to begin proclaiming the Good News of Jesus. In these few verses, Mark begins to answer them by telling them how the Good News of God that Jesus proclaimed began, and what the place of John the Baptist is in God's plan. As we read, let us try to notice how the Good News penetrates into the lives of the people.

### Gospel Reading – Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way.

A voice cries in the wilderness:

Prepare a way for the Lord,  
make his path straight,

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins.

John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey.

In the course of his preaching he said, 'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

### Reflect

*Spend a few moments in quiet reflection*

### Commentary

*Mark 1:1: The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

In the first sentence of his Gospel, Mark says: The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, Son of God! (Mk 1:1). At the end of the Gospel, when Jesus is dying, a soldier exclaims: Truly this man was the Son of God (Mk 15:39). At the beginning and at the end we come across this title, Son of God. Between the beginning and the end, throughout the pages of his Gospel, Mark explains how this central truth of our faith, that Jesus is the Son of God, has to be understood and proclaimed.

*Mark 1:2-3: The seed of the Good News is hidden in the hope of people.*

To point to the beginning of the Good News, Mark quotes the prophets Malachi and Isaiah. In the texts of these two prophets we see the hope that dwelt in the hearts of the people in the time of Jesus. The people hoped that the messenger, proclaimed by Malachi, would come to prepare the way of the Lord (Mal 3:1) as was proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah who said: "A voice cries, 'Prepare in the desert a way for the Lord. Make a straight path in the wilderness'" (Is 40:3). For Mark,

the seed of the Good News is the hope raised in people by the great promises that Jesus had made in the past through the two prophets. To this day, the hope of the people is the hook on which the Good News of God hangs. In order to know how to begin proclaiming the Good News, it is important to discover the hope that the people hold in their hearts. Hope is the last to die!

*Mark 1:4-5: The popular movement begun by John the Baptist increases peoples' hope.*

Mark does what we still do today. He uses the Bible to shed light on the facts of life. John the Baptist had started a great popular movement. All Judea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to John! Mark uses the texts from Malachi and Isaiah to shed light on this popular movement begun by John the Baptist. He shows that with the coming of John the Baptist, the hope of the people had begun to find an answer, to be realized. The seed of the Good News begins to sprout and grow.

*Mark 1:6-8: John the Baptist is the prophet Elijah expected by the people.*

It was said of Elijah that he would come to prepare the way of the Messiah, and that "He will reconcile parents to their children and children to their parents" (Mal 3:24; cf Lk 1:17). In other words, they hoped that Elijah would come to rebuild community life. Elijah was known as "a man wearing a hair cloak...and a leather loincloth" (2 Kg 1:8). Mark says that John wore camel hair. He was saying clearly that John the Baptist had come to fulfil the mission of the Prophet Elijah (Mk 9:11-13). In the 70's, the time when Mark was writing, many people thought that John the Baptist was the Messiah (cf. Acts 19:1-3). To help them discern, Mark reports John's own words: After me is coming someone who is more powerful than me, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit. Mark says that John points the way to Jesus. He tells the community that John was not the Messiah, but his precursor.

## Points for meditation

- What pleased or struck you most in the text?
- What does the text say of John the Baptist's mission?
- Why does the Gospel quote the two prophets of the Old Testament?
- What does the text tell us concerning the person of Jesus and his mission?
- What does that teach us today?

## Closing Prayer

We give you thanks, O God our Father, for your son Jesus who came to raise us up and set us on the right way. When you awaken in our hearts a thirst for prayer and loving service, you prepare us for the dawn of that new day when our glory will be made manifest with all the saints in the presence of the Son of Man. Amen.