

Sunday Gospel Readings with *Lectio Divina*

Year C: Year of Luke


“The Roman Catholic Bishops of Scotland once more recommend this resource for the prayerful reading of the word of God. The 2008 Synod of Bishops in Rome had as its theme the word of God and *Lectio Divina* was recognised, described and recommended as an important expression of the Church’s love of Sacred Scripture (see the Message to the People of God, 9). The Bishops are grateful to the Scottish Bible Society and all those who have worked to produce this volume based on the readings for Year C of the Lectionary.”

Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Scotland



These *Lectio Divina* outlines are also available in Albanian, Dutch, French, Greek, Maltese, Portuguese, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and other languages.

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“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instructions for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17
Good News Bible





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Sunday Gospel Readings with Lectio Divina Year C: Luke

INTRODUCTION

These weekly outlines combine the Liturgy's Sunday Gospel readings with the *lectio divina* approach to Holy Scripture.

Lectio divina is a dynamic, life-oriented approach to reading Holy Scriptures encouraged by both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. It provides a framework for a faithful and respectful reading of the Bible that is sincere and authentic.

Lectio divina is a blessing for the entire Church as it opens up the rich truths of Scripture for every Christian. Through it believers are invited to read, understand and deepen their appreciation of the Scriptures and to seek guidance for their lives in the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

Our real goal is to meet our Lord as we read his Word and allow him to transform our lives to be more like him through the work of the Holy Spirit.

All the information necessary for you to have a meaningful encounter with God's Word is included in this booklet. These outlines can be used individually or in groups.

The following pages introduce the four steps of *lectio divina* with some extra tips for using these outlines in groups.



ABOUT LECTIO DIVINA

History

Lectio divina dates back to the early Church Fathers around 300 AD. The four steps were first recorded by a monk, Guigo Cartujo, in 1173. These steps Lectio (Reading), Meditatio (Meditation), Oratio (Prayer) and Contemplatio (Contemplation) remain central today although methods differ.

Overview

In essence *lectio divina* is a simple way to meet with the Lord through reflection and prayer based on Holy Scripture. It is not a study method. Background knowledge can be helpful but is not essential.

Used in groups a structure is necessary but for individuals the steps need not be followed rigidly. Our aim is meeting God, not just completing the steps themselves. So when the Lord impresses something on us we need to stop and wait. We can always come back to the steps another time. We don't want to lose what God is saying to us.

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LECTIO – READING

Reading the Scripture passage humbly and prayerfully is the foundation for everything else that follows and cannot be rushed. So begin with a prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to ‘lead you into all the truth’ (John 16:13).

Read the passage slowly and carefully. Avoid being tempted to look at the Lectio comments or any of the other steps at this stage.

Have a notebook and pencil ready. Underline, or make a note of, any words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down any questions that occur to you. Read the passage several times and read it aloud. Give yourself time to understand and appreciate what is being said.

Now read the Lectio comments and reflect on the ways they are similar or different to your first thoughts.

MEDITATIO – MEDITATION

Meditation deepens our appreciation of the passage and helps us to explore its riches. We read in 2 Timothy 3:16 that ‘All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instructions for right living...’ So approach Scripture in faith expecting God to speak to you. He may reveal something of himself to you. He might highlight an attitude or behaviour of yours that needs to change. He might show you a promise to encourage and strengthen you.

Here are some suggested approaches you may find helpful.

Use your imagination. Picture the passage; put yourself into the scene and become part of the story. See things through the eyes of the other characters, listen to what they say, watch their reactions, imagine how they feel. Keep coming back to Jesus. Get to know him; delight yourself and become fascinated by him, his words, his actions, the way he responds – everything about him.

Ask questions. Use your own questions and the questions given to think more deeply about the passage and what God wants to say to you. Ask Jesus why he did and said what he did. Try to understand his reasons and intentions. Allow time to be quiet, to listen and hear his answer.

Let the Word be a mirror for you. As we read the Bible it shows us more of what the Christian life looks like and where ours needs to change. We see how God’s Word applies to our daily life, as an individual, and as part of our community and society. We will find promises and encouragement, challenges and demands. If we are willing God will nurture and free us to be more fully human and fully alive.

ORATIO – PRAYER

Prayer opens up a conversation between God and us. In the Psalms we see how the writers pour out their feelings to God, often mixing hopes and fears side by side. God values our honesty. We can’t hide anything from him anyway. Using the words of the responsorial psalm can help us but we can also use our own words to have a heart-to-heart conversation with a very special friend.

Through prayer we make our response to the light God’s Word has shed on how we are living our lives. Now we can bring what is happening in our own life and in our community before God. We speak and listen, listen and reflect – it is a conversation with God.

CONTEMPLATIO – CONTEMPLATION:

To help us interpret the Gospel reading the Liturgy provides two further Scripture readings. Reflecting on these can both enrich our understanding of the text and bring into focus a response we may need to make to the Lord.

Contemplation gives us the opportunity for an intimate time of communion with God. Be still before God and invite him in. Few words, if any, are necessary here. Enjoy time in his presence. Just be with him and let him love you. Let him refresh your soul.

Review

After you have finished your time of reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation you may want to jot down in a notebook any experiences or thoughts that particularly impressed you. You may find it helpful to look back at these later.



USING THESE OUTLINES IN GROUPS

When *lectio divina* is used in a group a little preparation is needed.

LECTIO:

Try one or more of the following ways of reading the passage. See what works best for your particular group.

Individual reading. To start with give everyone time to read through the passage silently.

Proclamation of the Word. One person reads (proclaims) the Word. This is the traditional manner of reading in the liturgical celebration.

Two readers. Two people read the text aloud alternately.

Each person reads a verse. This is a way of involving each participant, inviting each to read from his own Bible, so that the reading is attentive and dynamic.

Audio version. If you have access to a recorded version of the text you could also use that. You may notice different words are stressed.

With different characters. Approach the text somewhat like a drama, in which one person is the narrator/reader, another takes the part of Jesus, a third takes another character. This can be the most dynamic or engaging method and helps us to identify just what the different characters in the passage are saying.

MEDITATIO:

- In the group setting, it is important that everyone is given time to participate, to share what the Lord has been saying to them. While the Lord speaks through his Word, he also speaks to us through our brothers and sisters. So as we listen to others we need to open our hearts to hear the Lord's voice speaking through them.
- It is important that everyone in the group understands that this sharing is to build one another up and enrich our experience. It is not necessary that everyone agrees about what is shared. You need to be careful to avoid this time turning into a debate or argument. The Lord knows us each as individuals so will have different things to say to us personally at this specific point in our lives.
- You can start with a simple question like "What catches your attention in this passage?" and use the printed questions. The aim is to help everyone feel comfortable to speak and share how the text has inspired them. Gently keep the group focused on the text and what God is saying.

PORATIO:

We suggest you give people time for personal silent prayer before God. You can also give opportunity for people to pray out loud in their own words and use verses from the responsorial prayer. The aim should be to help each person make a personal response to the Lord during this time.

CONTEMPLATIO:

Contemplation by its very nature is an individual exercise and silence is necessary. If you have room it may be helpful to suggest people move so they have their own 'personal space'.

**The Scripture references for the Psalms follow the Hebrew numbering used in many recent Bibles including the Jerusalem Bible but some Bibles use different numbering. If Psalm 23 The Good Shepherd is numbered as Psalm 22 in your Bible, please refer to your church lectionary for all the correct Psalm references for your Bible.*

WATCH AND PRAY

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

²⁵“There will be strange things happening to the sun, the moon, and the stars. On earth whole countries will be in despair, afraid of the roar of the sea and the raging tides. ²⁶People will faint from fear as they wait for what is coming over the whole earth, for the powers in space will be driven from their courses. ²⁷Then the Son of Man will appear, coming in a cloud with great power and glory. ²⁸When these things begin to happen, stand up and raise your heads, because your salvation is near.”

³⁴“Be on your guard! Don’t let yourselves become occupied with too much feasting and drinking and with the worries of this life, or that Day may suddenly catch you ³⁵like a trap. For it will come upon all people everywhere on earth. ³⁶Be on the alert and pray always that you will have the strength to go safely through all those things that will happen and to stand before the Son of Man.”

*Other Readings: Jeremiah 33:14-16; *Psalm 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14;
1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2*



LECTIO:

Advent opens with a vivid teaching from Jesus on what the days preceding his second coming will be like. The words are taken from Jesus’ teaching ministry in Jerusalem following his public entry.

Jesus’ teaching ministry did two things. It challenged the Jewish authorities who refused to recognise God’s action in what Jesus said and did. It also reached out to the Jewish crowds who flocked after him wherever he went.

Apparently Jesus had decided to reserve some teachings for his inner group – the disciples. The verses above were for his disciples’ ears only. Jesus is speaking about the end days when the world as we know it will cease. Scholars use the technical term ‘eschatological’ to describe this sort of teaching.

This collapse of the world as we know it will be terrifying. Jesus doesn’t underestimate people’s reaction either; most will panic and be terrified. But, and

**See note at the end of the Introduction on the previous page.*

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it is a big but, Jesus tells his disciples they have nothing to fear from these terrible events. He explains why - because when these things happen they will know their ‘salvation is near’.

In this madness people will still be struggling to survive. But for Jesus’ disciples it will be a time of liberation. There is just one proviso - the disciples must be on the alert. Jesus wants to find them prepared, ready. And we too must stay alert and keep our focus on Jesus in the midst of the busyness and temptations of everyday life.



MEDITATIO:

- How can we balance ‘waiting for the Lord to come’ alongside a godly enjoyment of all the good things human life offers?
- Compare the different responses of the people in verse 26 with those in verse 28. What will help us respond like the faithful people in verse 28?
- How can Jesus help us with the worries of life? Does 1 Peter 5:7 help us?
- How prepared do you feel for Jesus’ return, say tomorrow? What might help you? Jesus gives us some guidance in verses 34 and 36.



ORATIO:

Today’s passage teaches us that prayer is vital in preparation for Jesus’ return. The verses selected from today’s Psalm remind us that God is righteous and good. He will guide us if we are willing to listen and he is a friend to all who obey him.

Read through these verses several times. Let God convince you of his love and care. Ask him to help make verses 4 and 5 your own prayer:

‘Teach me your ways, O Lord;
make them known to me.

Teach me to live according to your truth,
For you are my God, who saves me.
I always trust in you.’



CONTEMPLATIO:

Ponder the phrase ‘your salvation is near’ and what this means to you. Contemplate Jesus returning to earth ‘with great power and glory’, and the joy he will share with everyone who loves him.

PREPARING THE WAY FOR JESUS

Luke 3:1-6

¹ It was the fifteenth year of the rule of the Emperor Tiberius; Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip was ruler of the territory of Iturea and Trachonitis; Lysanias was ruler of Abilene, ² and Annas and Caiaphas were high priests. At that time the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. ³ So John went throughout the whole territory of the River Jordan, preaching, "Turn away from your sins and be baptized, and God will forgive your sins."

⁴ As it is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

"Someone is shouting in the desert:

'Get the road ready for the Lord;
make a straight path for him to travel!

⁵ Every valley must be filled up,
every hill and mountain levelled off.

The winding roads must be made straight,
and the rough paths made smooth.

⁶ The whole human race will see God's salvation!' "

Other Readings: Baruch 5:1-9; Psalm 126; Philippians 1:3-6, 8-11



LECTIO:

Luke wants people to be able to pin down the exact period of time he is talking about. He sees John the Baptist rooted in reality as he briefly moves centre stage. John's story begins to unfold in Luke 1 and 2.

Every Jew would have known about Tiberius the Roman emperor because Palestine was under Roman rule. Pontius Pilate, the local Roman ruler, had been notorious and they would probably have known about the various Herodian governors, or kings. The names of the high priests, Ananias and Caiaphas, would have also been instantly recognizable.

Here, in this inflammatory political situation of Roman occupation, John began his God-given ministry in the Jordan valley. He preached a message of repentance and baptism. Those who were willing, and there were many, repented of their sins and were baptized publicly in the river Jordan.



MEDITATIO:

- Imagine you have been forced to live in another country, and as a slave too. What might your feelings be? What would be top of your prayer list?
- Why do you think it was so important for Luke to link John's ministry to historical people and events?
- John's ministry was to prepare the way for people to meet Jesus. How can we prepare the way for people to meet Jesus today? What obstacles might people have and how can we help?



ORATIO:

Psalm 126 is a psalm of thanksgiving for past deliverance and a plea for help. Thank God that our sins can be forgiven and praise him for the times he has rescued you in the past.

Pray for those needing special help now. If these are hard times for you, perhaps you can ask someone to pray for you too?

Join Isaiah in praying that 'the whole human race will see God's salvation'. Pray especially for people that you know.



CONTEMPLATIO:

The reading from Philippians offers a rich seam of joyful hope – make the promises there your own. During the coming week reflect on the Day of Christ and our hope of meeting Jesus when his work in us is complete. Ask God to shape your life so he brings glory to himself.

LIVING RIGHT

Luke 3:10-18

¹⁰ The people asked him, "What are we to do, then?"

¹¹ He answered, "Whoever has two shirts must give one to the man who has none, and whoever has food must share it."

¹² Some tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what are we to do?"

¹³ "Don't collect more than is legal," he told them.

¹⁴ Some soldiers also asked him, "What about us? What are we to do?"

He said to them, "Don't take money from anyone by force or accuse anyone falsely. Be content with your pay."

¹⁵ People's hopes began to rise, and they began to wonder whether John perhaps might be the Messiah. ¹⁶ So John said to all of them, "I baptize you with water, but someone is coming who is much greater than I am. I am not good enough even to untie his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ He has his winnowing shovel with him, to thresh out all the grain and gather the wheat into his barn; but he will burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out."

¹⁸ In many different ways John preached the Good News to the people and urged them to change their ways.

Other Readings: Zephaniah 3:14-18; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7



LECTIO:

Week by week Luke leads us through John's ministry. Now the final tragic conclusion in Herod's prison looms.

But first Luke reveals John's ministry to the different people who sought peace of mind and a way forward. He gave direct instructions.

The hated tax collectors, for example, are told not to abuse their power. In John's day, provided the Roman authorities received their taxes they turned a blind eye if the tax collectors took more for themselves. So tax collectors could effectively rob people and put the surplus cash in their own pockets. Many grew very rich doing so.

By contrast, soldiers were poorly paid. They used force to obtain things like extra food and money from people.

Neither situation was right. John preached a moral life and those who listened to him and accepted his teaching changed their lives.

People began to hope that John might be the long expected Messiah. John shattered their dream immediately by saying, 'someone is coming who is much greater than I am.' John described his mission as a preparation for the coming Messiah.

John also met Herod Antipas, who was keen to hear his teaching. Herod Antipas, one of Herod the Great's sons, had been appointed leader of the northern area of Galilee by the Romans. John, never one to hold back, was very direct in criticizing Herod Antipas' immoral lifestyle. Sadly, John's directness led to his arrest and imprisonment by Herod.



MEDITATIO:

- Consider how the principles in John's teaching in verses 8 and 11-14 are relevant to us today. What stands out for you?
- Some people have more than they really need; others, not enough. How do you relate to verse 11?
- Verse 17 could strike terror in your heart until you remember Jesus is the Good News (the forgiveness of sins). What does the Good News mean for you and how do you balance it with verse 17?



ORATIO:

Ask the Holy Spirit to use today's Gospel reading to reveal if there is anything you need to do or to change.

Read Isaiah 12:2-6 and Zephaniah 3:14-18 and make these great hymns of praise personal to you.

Praise God for the wonderful things he has done. Praise him for sending Jesus. Thank him for revealing his love for you and for the countless times he has helped you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you tell others just how wonderful God is.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Contemplate Jesus as Saviour and think of his redeeming grace opening the door to salvation for everyone who will accept him.

Consider Paul's wise advice in Philippians 4:4-7. Remember you can give God all your cares and worries in prayer; his peace will fill and protect your heart and mind.

JUMP FOR JOY

Luke 1:39-44

³⁹ Soon afterwards Mary got ready and hurried off to a town in the hill country of Judea. ⁴⁰ She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby moved within her. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and said in a loud voice, "You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the child you will bear!" ⁴³ Why should this great thing happen to me, that my Lord's mother comes to visit me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard your greeting, the baby within me jumped with gladness.

Other Readings: Micah 5:1-4; Psalm 80:1-2, 14-15, 17-18; Hebrews 10:5-10

LECTIO:

With the angel Gabriel's amazing news of her cousin Elizabeth's unexpected pregnancy (Luke 1: 36) it didn't take Mary long to pack and set off for a visit. Now she had incredible news of her own.

With many of God's announcements and actions the full significance can be slow to dawn on the individuals involved. Abraham's wife Sarah laughed when she was told she would become a mother in old age (Genesis 18:12). Zechariah, Elizabeth's husband, doubted and was struck dumb throughout Elizabeth's pregnancy (Luke 1:20). Mary, whatever her own doubts and anxieties, simply accepted what God wanted, 'I am the Lord's servant, may it happen to me as you said' (Luke 1:38).

A shouted greeting announced Mary's arrival to Elizabeth, and caused a surprising thing to happen. Elizabeth's baby leapt in the womb. She was probably accustomed to the baby moving by now. The surprising thing was that the Holy Spirit caused the movement. And Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, 'recognises' and proclaims Mary as the mother of the Lord and blesses her in this role.

This short passage is often referred to as the Visitation. Not only is Mary visiting Elizabeth, but Jesus is making his first visit to 'his people'. John, still hidden within Elizabeth's womb, recognises Jesus as the Messiah and leaps for pure joy.

What a precious encounter it must have been for the two expectant mothers and the babies they carried. Such an encouragement to each of them. Mary's faith must have had a tremendous boost. As she blesses Mary, Elizabeth echoes the Angel Gabriel's words to Mary (Luke 1:28, 30-33).

MEDITATIO:

- Consider how Mary might have felt before and after her visit to see her cousin Elizabeth. On the one hand, there was Elizabeth's wonderful news after a lifetime of childlessness. But what would Elizabeth, wife of the priest Zechariah, make of Mary's news? Would she believe her or would she shun her?
- Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth speaks out and confirms Mary as the mother of the long-awaited Messiah. How might Mary have felt about these words? The verses following today's reading give a big clue (Luke 1:46-56).
- Consider the Holy Spirit's role in guiding Elizabeth and Mary. Have you experienced the Holy Spirit guiding you? What do you remember of these events?

ORATIO:

Psalm 80 is a heartfelt plea for God to restore the nation of Israel. Join the psalmist and cry out to the faithful Shepherd (God) to rescue the people you know who do not follow him.

Ask God to turn the hardened hearts of people in your country towards him. Sometimes our own hearts can do with a little softening in some areas too. God has promised to give us hearts of flesh to replace our hearts of stone (Ezekiel 11:19).

Ask God to help you recognise the leading of the Holy Spirit and for the faith and courage to obey his prompting.

CONTEMPLATIO:

God is often described as a shepherd. Contemplate the ways God shepherds you personally and then how he shepherds whole nations, when they allow him to do so.

Meditate on the title given to Jesus – Prince of Peace.

Micah's prophecy was given about 700 years before Jesus' birth. He was not the only one to prophesy Jesus' birth. Jeremiah announced it too around 150 years later. We read this in the Sunday readings three weeks ago (Jeremiah 33:14-16). Reflect on Micah's prophecy. What does it signify for you?

A SAVIOUR IS BORN FOR US

Luke 2:1-14

¹ At that time the Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ² When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. ³ Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own town.

⁴ Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David. ⁵ He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, ⁶ and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. ⁷ She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger – there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

⁸ There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, ¹⁰ but the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. ¹¹ This very day in David’s town your Saviour was born – Christ the Lord! ¹² And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great army of heaven’s angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God:

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with
whom he is pleased!”

Other Readings: Isaiah 9:1-7; Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13; Titus 2:11-14



LECTIO:

The story of Jesus’ birth is described in two scenes. In the first scene, verses 1-7, Luke explains how Jesus came to be born in Bethlehem, in the south of Palestine, when Mary and Joseph were living in Nazareth, in the north.

Joseph was required to attend a census. As a descendant of King David, that meant returning to Bethlehem. It is here that Mary gives birth to Jesus. God’s promise that he would send the Messiah, a descendant of King David, is fulfilled (Isaiah 9:7). The place of Jesus’ birth also fulfils Micah’s prophecy (Micah 5:2).

In scene two, verses 8-14, we hear how the news of Jesus’ birth reaches the outside world. Shepherds are the surprised recipients of the amazing news. God sends an angel to reveal the birth and real identity of this baby. The proof the angel gives the shepherds that this baby is God’s promised Saviour is that they will find him in Bethlehem, lying in – of all places – an animals’ feeding trough, a manger!

It’s almost as if the angels can’t contain their excitement at the birth of this child. For then suddenly a great army of angels join the first angel and sing their praise to God.

Our Scripture reading finishes here, but the story continues. The shepherds believe the news the angel tells them and go to Bethlehem to see for themselves. They find Jesus and tell Mary and Joseph everything the angel told them. They are the very first people to announce that Jesus is the long-awaited Saviour after his birth (verses 15-20).



MEDITATIO:

- Consider why God chose to reveal the birth of his son to shepherds, who in Jesus’ day had a very low social status and were often considered as thieves.
- What clues do the circumstances of Jesus’ birth give us that he would be a very different Messiah, and usher in a different kingdom, to the one people were expecting?
- Marvel that Jesus was prepared to leave the glory of heaven to be born as a baby in an animals’ stable.
- Consider Jesus as your Saviour and Lord. What does this mean for you?



ORATIO:

Why not echo the words of the angelic army on that very first Christmas day: ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven’? Repeat this great proclamation of praise several times.

Thank God for sending Jesus as your Saviour.

Remember those who can still find no room for Jesus.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Spend a few minutes considering the four titles given to our Saviour in Isaiah 9:6: ‘Wonderful Counsellor’, ‘Mighty God’, ‘Eternal Father’, ‘Prince of Peace’.

Reflect too on the message of Titus 2:11-14, that by God’s grace we can live a life pleasing to God and look forward to the day when Jesus will return to earth again.

IN FATHER'S HOUSE

Luke 2:41-52

⁴¹ Every year the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. ⁴² When Jesus was twelve years old, they went to the festival as usual. ⁴³ When the festival was over, they started back home, but the boy Jesus stayed in Jerusalem. His parents did not know this; ⁴⁴ they thought that he was with the group, so they travelled a whole day and then started looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ They did not find him, so they went back to Jerusalem looking for him. ⁴⁶ On the third day they found him in the Temple, sitting with the Jewish teachers, listening to them and asking questions. ⁴⁷ All who heard him were amazed at his intelligent answers. ⁴⁸ His parents were astonished when they saw him, and his mother said to him, "My son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you."

⁴⁹ He answered them, "Why did you have to look for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand his answer.

⁵¹ So Jesus went back with them to Nazareth, where he was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² Jesus grew both in body and in wisdom, gaining favour with God and people.

*Other Readings: 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28; Psalm 84:1-2, 4-5, 8-9;
1 John 3:1-2, 21-24*

LECTIO:

After the events surrounding Jesus' miraculous birth we are given very few details about his childhood. This passage in Luke and another recorded in Matthew 2 (which we will read next Sunday) are the only two glimpses we are given.

As pious Jews, Mary and Joseph along with their relatives and friends, make their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The occasion is the week-long Passover festival honouring God for saving and delivering their forefathers from Egypt (Exodus 12:1-27).

It was a trip they had made many times before. This year, however, proved to be particularly memorable. Instead of returning with everyone else Jesus, who at the age of twelve was probably on his first pilgrimage, remained behind in the temple.

When Joseph and Mary realise Jesus is not with their group they return to Jerusalem. After three anxious days searching they finally find him talking to the religious teachers in the temple!

Jesus appears to have been completely absorbed, spending four days at the temple. He was in his element; listening to the religious teachers and asking them questions. What stunned his listeners was his wisdom and understanding, far beyond his age and learning. There was clearly something special about this boy. It was a prophetic sign, giving a glimpse of who Jesus really is.

Mary and Joseph are understandably upset that Jesus didn't return home with them after the festival and caused them all this worry. Jesus' reply indicates that he took it for granted they would know where to find him; in the temple – 'in my Father's house'.

Mary and Joseph plainly didn't understand Jesus' words or actions although Mary 'treasured all these things in her heart'. After this event Luke tells us Jesus returned with them to Nazareth and was obedient to them. He grew up, increased in wisdom and gained favour with both God and man.

MEDITATIO:

- What does this passage reveal to us about the twelve-year-old Jesus' thoughts regarding himself and his heavenly father?
- What does this passage tell us about Jesus' priorities? How would this be reflected in his future ministry?
- Jesus could have experienced God's presence anywhere. Why do you think he chose to go to the temple on this occasion?

ORATIO:

We might capture something of Jesus' joy at being in his Father's house by praying the words of Psalm 84:2-9.

Today's passage focuses on family relationships with both our heavenly Father and our human family. Give thanks to God that you too are his child. Take time to pray for members of your church and of your own family.

CONTEMPLATIO:

The verses in 1 John 3:1-2, 21-24 contain some amazing truths. Allow the wonder of a loving God who calls you his child to fill you.

Consider God's promise that we can live in union with him if we obey him.

THE NEW KING REVEALED

Matthew 2:1-12

¹Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the time when Herod was king. Soon afterwards, some men who studied the stars came from the east to Jerusalem ²and asked, “Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him.”

³When King Herod heard about this, he was very upset, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. ⁴He called together all the chief priests and the teachers of the Law and asked them, “Where will the Messiah be born?”

⁵“In the town of Bethlehem in Judea,” they answered. “For this is what the prophet wrote:

⁶‘Bethlehem in the land of Judah,
you are by no means the least of the leading cities of Judah;
for from you will come a leader
who will guide my people Israel.’”

⁷So Herod called the visitors from the east to a secret meeting and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem with these instructions: “Go and make a careful search for the child, and when you find him, let me know, so that I too may go and worship him.”

⁹And so they left, and on their way they saw the same star they had seen in the east. When they saw it, how happy they were, what joy was theirs! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹¹They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshipped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him.

¹²Then they returned to their country by another road, since God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.

Other Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13; Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6



LECTIO:

Matthew’s great objective is to highlight Jesus as the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies for a Messiah or saviour.

Matthew relates several stories about Jesus’ early years. The visit of the magi is well known, but were there three wise men? The Bible doesn’t actually tell us how many wise men came, just that three gifts are given.

Sunday Gospel Readings with Lectio Divina Year C: Luke

What is the significance of the visit? Some scholars suggest that the fact that the wise men came from another country indicated the worldwide significance of Jesus’ birth. He would be a Messiah not only for the Jews but for all nations.

Herod is not pleased to hear about the arrival of a Messiah who might one day take his throne. After some careful questioning he sends the wise men on their way. The questions were more about saving his kingship than helping them. It seems from his earliest days Jesus forced people to choose.

The wise men set off for Bethlehem. Much to their delight they see the star again, which guides them to Jesus. They worship the new king and present to him their special gifts. God warns them in a dream not to reveal Jesus’ identity to Herod. So having fulfilled their mission they return home via another route.



MEDITATIO:

- Consider why God chose people from another country to reveal the birth of the Messiah to King Herod.
- The wise men’s visit alerted Herod and the people of Jerusalem to the Messiah’s birth. But they are only given part of the picture at this point. Consider God’s purposes in this.
- Think about the different ways we can worship Jesus. What ‘gifts’ could you offer him today?
- Who is Jesus to you: a king or your King? What practical difference does your answer make to the way you live?



ORATIO:

Psalm 72 was written for the coronation of a king; down the ages it has often been interpreted as referring to the Messiah. Pray through the verses selected for today.

Pray for leaders, governments and people in authority to rule and act justly. Ask God to help those who have been treated unfairly.



CONTEMPLATIO:

The wise men worshipped Jesus as a great King even though they only saw him as a baby. Spend some time in adoration of the true King of Kings.

HEAVEN OPENED

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

¹⁵ People's hopes began to rise, and they began to wonder whether John perhaps might be the Messiah. ¹⁶ So John said to all of them, "I baptize you with water, but someone is coming who is much greater than I am. I am not good enough even to untie his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

²¹ After all the people had been baptized, Jesus also was baptized. While he was praying, heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit came down upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you."

Other Readings: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; Psalm 104:1-4, 24-25, 27-30; Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7



LECTIO:

Luke is our guide through this event which launches Jesus into his salvation ministry. Luke reminds us of the Jewish nation's huge anticipation of a Messiah, or Saviour. The Messiah was well known to them in some respects, all the great prophets spoke of his coming. And yet the people were still waiting.

Over the years, especially in unsettled times, people must have looked carefully at many notable people. Now they wondered, even hoped, that John might be the promised Messiah. John swiftly dashed those hopes and proclaimed the imminent arrival of the real Saviour, who 'will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire'.

John revealed the Saviour was to be a spiritual not political leader. He would baptize people with the Holy Spirit. It was a rather obscure promise to make - how would John's followers respond? Would they understand?

Here beside the river Jordan Jesus is baptized along with everyone else. Although he had not sinned he is nonetheless willing to identify with ordinary sinful people in a public act of repentance and conversion.

Matthew records John's shocked reaction when Jesus steps up for baptism (Matthew 3:13-15). But Luke focuses on Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus remains in prayer and contemplation after his baptism. Then the miracle occurs, Jesus sees the Holy Spirit descend on him in the form of a dove. And Jesus' prayer becomes a communion, as the Father speaks to him and affirms him.

One thing we can note is that as soon as Jesus has identified with humankind, in the baptism of repentance, his Father speaks out loud and clear, "You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you."

MEDITATIO:

- What made John appear to be the promised Messiah? And why was John's baptism necessary? How could it help the people prepare for Jesus and his message?
- The baptism of Jesus became an 'epiphany', a revelation of God – in the form of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (the dove). What might this experience and manifestation have meant for Jesus himself?
- Imagine you were there and saw the dove and heard God's voice. How would this influence your opinion of Jesus?

ORATIO:

Psalm 104 is a vibrant song of praise. The opening verse declares:

'Praise the Lord, my soul!

O Lord, my God, how great you are!'

In the following thirty-four verses the psalmist looks at the everyday world around him and sees God's hand in it all. Praise just bubbles up and pours out to God.

Read through the verses slowly. Then write your own list of reasons to praise God and offer this to him as a prayer of worship. You may want to make this into your very own psalm to God.

CONTEMPLATIO:

Consider today's verses from Isaiah and what they reveal about both Jesus and John the Baptist. Let the promises contained in these few verses sink deep into your heart.

Think about the great words of St Paul in his letter to Titus. Our salvation is based upon God's mercy and he gives us the grace to live our lives in a way that pleases him.

God wants us to have eternal life with him and has done everything to make it possible. Another wonderful promise full of hope that we should allow to settle in our hearts.

WEDDING MIRACLE

John 2:1-11

¹Two days later there was a wedding in the town of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ²and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³When the wine had given out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine left."

⁴"You must not tell me what to do," Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

⁵Jesus' mother then told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

⁶The Jews have rules about ritual washing, and for this purpose six stone water jars were there, each one large enough to hold about a hundred litres. ⁷Jesus said to the servants, "Fill these jars with water." They filled them to the brim, ⁸and then he told them, "Now draw some water out and take it to the man in charge of the feast." They took him the water, ⁹which now had turned into wine, and he tasted it. He did not know where this wine had come from (but, of course, the servants who had drawn out the water knew); so he called the bridegroom ¹⁰and said to him, "Everyone else serves the best wine first, and after the guests have had plenty to drink, he serves the ordinary wine. But you have kept the best wine until now!"

¹¹Jesus performed this first miracle in Cana in Galilee; there he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

Other Readings: Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 96:1-3, 7-10; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11



LECTIO:

John often tells us about events not related in the other Gospels. The wedding at Cana is one of them.

Much of the focus in this passage is on Jesus and his mother Mary. Many details are not included, so as we read the passage the questions start to pop up. How did Jesus come to know the bride and groom? Did Jesus know their families? Were the bride and groom followers of Jesus? Were all the disciples there?

John turns our attention to the wine running out. This would have been a major disgrace for the bride's family and would have spoilt the bride and groom's special day.

Only a few short words are exchanged between Jesus and Mary. Have they had conversations like this before about Jesus' ministry? We are not told.

When Mary speaks about the need for wine, Jesus takes this to mean she is asking him to do something about it. But he is reluctant. Mary doesn't give up hope. She simply tells the servants to do whatever Jesus tells them. Mary doesn't ask for a miracle in so many words but perhaps this is what she is hoping for.

Jesus instructs the servants to fill six huge stone jars with water. The servants follow Jesus' instructions and the water miraculously becomes wine.

We are not specifically told whether the wedding guests know about this miracle at the time. But surely the servants would have talked about this amazing event - if not during the wedding itself then afterwards.

We are however told that the disciples did know about it and this miracle caused them to believe in Jesus. John also adds the interesting detail that the wine Jesus produced was no ordinary wine – it was top quality!



MEDITATIO:

- Meditate on the symbolism in this miracle – the bride and groom, a wedding celebration, the new wine.
- How surprised are you that Jesus' first miracle is turning water into wine? Why do you think Jesus went ahead and performed the miracle?
- What does this passage reveal about what Mary believed about her son?



ORATIO:

Psalm 96 is a wonderful song of praise. Why not join the psalmist and make his words part of your daily prayer this week,

'Proclaim every day the good news that he has saved us.'



CONTEMPLATIO:

Allow God to cherish you and lavish the gifts of his Spirit on you. We are part of the church, which the Bible tells us is the bride of Jesus himself. It is his great pleasure to lavish his love on his bride.

As God's love flows over you remember God's desire to have a perfect bride. Don't lose heart. God can transform his bride as easily and wonderfully as Jesus transformed the wine.

LIBERTY PROCLAIMED

Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21

Luke 1

¹Dear Theophilus:

Many people have done their best to write a report of the things that have taken place among us. ²They wrote what we have been told by those who saw these things from the beginning and who proclaimed the message. ³And so, your Excellency, because I have carefully studied all these matters from their beginning, I thought it would be good to write an orderly account for you. ⁴I do this so that you will know the full truth about everything which you have been taught.

Luke 4

¹⁴Then Jesus returned to Galilee, and the power of the Holy Spirit was with him. The news about him spread throughout all that territory. ¹⁵He taught in the synagogues and was praised by everyone.

¹⁶Then Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath he went as usual to the synagogue. He stood up to read the Scriptures ¹⁷and was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it is written:

¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind;
to set free the oppressed

¹⁹and announce that the time has come
when the Lord will save his people.”

²⁰Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. All the people in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him, ²¹as he said to them, “This passage of scripture has come true today, as you heard it being read.”

Other Readings: Nehemiah 8:2-6, 8-10; Psalm 19:7-9, 14; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30



LECTIO:

Two extracts from the Gospel of Luke are presented together today. The first is an introduction to the second.

In Chapter 1 Luke is keen to show the quality and reliability of his information. Firstly he has spoken to eye witnesses of the events he describes, and secondly he has done extensive research. So his report is not the sort of ‘embroidered news’ you

can hear in the market or read in newspapers. The letter is addressed to Theophilus, which means ‘God’s friend’.

Jesus’ visit to the synagogue in Nazareth is the focus of Chapter 4. While Isaiah is chosen for him, it appears Jesus selects these specific verses. He reads them to the gathered community.

Jesus then teaches on the meaning of these words. He tells them that Isaiah’s prophecy, written hundreds of years ago, ‘has come true today’! The implication is that Jesus himself is the fulfilment of these words. Local man Jesus now comes with the good news for the poor, freedom to captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. We are not told whether Jesus is speaking literally or metaphorically here.

But how did this community feel when Jesus spoke out that Sabbath morning? What happened in their hearts and minds? Did Jesus’ words make any sense?

While this event took place two thousand years ago the truth of God’s Word is everlasting. So reading of Scripture should never be just a mere cultural event. Whenever the Scriptures are proclaimed they are alive, active and always full of power.



MEDITATIO:

- What do you think the people listening to Jesus would have understood when he said, ‘This passage of scripture has come true today, as you heard it being read.’?
- How well do you think these verses from Isaiah sum up Jesus’ ministry on earth? In what ways did Jesus fulfil this prophecy?
- Consider the good news of the Gospel. Give thanks for all the ways it is true for you personally.



ORATIO:

Pray that in your church everyone will play their part so the whole church functions healthily, as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12: 12-30.

Pray about your role in this. Ask God to show you if there are things you should be doing or allowing others to do.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Reflect on Nehemiah 8:10:

‘The joy that the Lord gives you will make you strong.’

FAITH REQUIRED

Luke 4:21-30

²¹as he said to them, “This passage of scripture has come true today, as you heard it being read.”

²²They were all well impressed with him and marvelled at the eloquent words that he spoke. They said, “Isn’t he the son of Joseph?”

²³He said to them, “I am sure that you will quote this proverb to me, ‘Doctor, heal yourself.’ You will also tell me to do here in my home town the same things you heard were done in Capernaum. ²⁴I tell you this,” Jesus added, “prophets are never welcomed in their home town.

²⁵“Listen to me: it is true that there were many widows in Israel during the time of Elijah, when there was no rain for three and a half years and a severe famine spread throughout the whole land. ²⁶Yet Elijah was not sent to anyone in Israel, but only to a widow living in Zarephath in the territory of Sidon. ²⁷And there were many people suffering from a dreaded skin disease who lived in Israel during the time of the prophet Elisha; yet not one of them was healed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

²⁸When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were filled with anger. ²⁹They rose up, dragged Jesus out of the town, and took him to the top of the hill on which their town was built. They meant to throw him over the cliff, ³⁰but he walked through the middle of the crowd and went his way.

*Other Readings: Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19; Psalm 71:1-6, 15, 17;
1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13*



LECTIO:

This week’s reading continues the passage we started last week. We are still in the synagogue in Nazareth but the atmosphere changes dramatically. From being impressed with his eloquent words (verse 22) the congregation become angry, drag Jesus out of town and want to throw him over a cliff (verse 28-29).

While there was amazement at Jesus’ teaching and his remarkable claim to be the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy – the Messiah – there was no faith or acceptance in the people. They simply could not accept a carpenter’s son and the Messiah as one and the same person.

Jesus reminded them of how it was for Elijah and Elisha. These great prophets also suffered disbelief from their own people.

Sunday Gospel Readings with Lectio Divina Year C: Luke

Elijah was the first great prophet God used to call his people back to him. Elijah prophesied a drought to King Ahab. When the three-year drought began God used a raven, an unclean bird, and a foreigner to save Elijah. The Lebanese woman took Elijah at his word and through her God saved the prophet. No Israelite helped him.

Elisha, Elijah’s successor as a prophet, healed Naaman, a Syrian army general, from a dreaded skin disease. Naaman did what Elisha asked him to do even though he thought it was foolish. He was completely healed and believed.

Not surprisingly Jesus’ words angered the people of Nazareth. They deeply resented the comparison with the faithless Israelites of Elijah and Elisha’s time. So they decided to get rid of the problem by killing Jesus.

The people in the synagogue were religious Sabbath-observing Jews. But they were not people of faith and so they rejected Jesus. They only saw the ‘local boy’, not the Saviour of mankind, and threw away the chance to become his disciples.



MEDITATIO:

- What can we learn from this passage about the sort of faith Jesus is looking for? Just attending church and listening to the sermon without faith isn’t enough.
- What can we learn from the two examples Jesus gives of the widow and Naaman? You can read these stories in 1 Kings 17:8-16 and 2 Kings 5:1-14.
- What can help our faith grow? How can we put the sort of faith Jesus seeks into action?



ORATIO:

Pray through the verses selected from Psalm 71. Ask God for opportunities to tell others how wonderful he is and how he has helped you.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Read 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13 through several times. As you sit with God allow him to reveal gently where he might want you to grow: in faith, or hope or love.

Consider God’s amazing words to the prophet in Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19. Which words strike you? What might God be saying to you?

FISHERS OF MEN

Luke 5:1-11

¹ One day Jesus was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret while the people pushed their way up to him to listen to the word of God. ² He saw two boats pulled up on the beach; the fishermen had left them and were washing the nets. ³ Jesus got into one of the boats – it belonged to Simon – and asked him to push off a little from the shore. Jesus sat in the boat and taught the crowd.

⁴ When he finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Push the boat out further to the deep water, and you and your partners let down your nets for a catch.”

⁵ “Master,” Simon answered, “we worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I will let down the nets.” ⁶ They let them down and caught such a large number of fish that the nets were about to break. ⁷ So they motioned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They came and filled both boats so full of fish that the boats were about to sink. ⁸ When Simon Peter saw what had happened, he fell on his knees before Jesus and said, “Go away from me, Lord! I am a sinful man!”

⁹ He and the others with him were all amazed at the large number of fish they had caught. ¹⁰ The same was true of Simon’s partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”

¹¹ They pulled the boats up on the beach, left everything, and followed Jesus.

Other Readings: Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 138: 1-5, 7-8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11



LECTIO:

This is such a well known story that we can read it and yet not get to the heart of this miraculous event. Luke invites us to become witnesses to the miracle and of the call of the first three disciples into service.

Crowds were already following Jesus to listen to him teaching on the word of God. What did they see in Jesus – was it something more than a simple preacher? Or did they recognise God’s representative?

When Simon witnesses the miraculous catch of fish he sees Jesus in a new light. He acknowledges Jesus as ‘Lord’ (verse 8) and feels the burden of his sinfulness before Jesus. He immediately falls to his knees and asks Jesus to leave him. The prophet Isaiah reacted in a similar way when he saw a vision of God (see Isaiah 6).



MEDITATIO:

- What does Simon’s initial reaction to this miracle reveal about who he thought Jesus was?
- Have you ever experienced the burden of your sinfulness? How do you think God wants us to respond to him at this time? What can we learn from Simon’s response?
- To become a ‘catcher of people’ Simon, James and John had to spend time with Jesus and follow him. What does this mean for us today? Is every Christian called to be ‘a catcher of people’? If so how can we draw practical lessons from Jesus in the time we spend with him?



ORATIO:

Give thanks that we can know forgiveness of our sins because of Jesus’ death and resurrection. 1 John 1:9 gives us the assurance that ‘if we confess our sins to God... he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing.’

Ask God to help you forget your own frailties and to give you the faith and courage to follow Jesus and tell others about him.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Contemplate God’s pure holiness. Join the seraphim in declaring God’s holiness and glory.

RIGHT PRIORITIES

Luke 6:17, 20-26

¹⁷ When Jesus had come down from the hill with the apostles, he stood on a level place with a large number of his disciples. A large crowd of people was there from all over Judea and from Jerusalem and from the coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon;

²⁰ Jesus looked at his disciples and said,

“Happy are you poor;
the Kingdom of God is yours!

²¹ Happy are you who are hungry now;
you will be filled!

Happy are you who weep now;
you will laugh!

²² “Happy are you when people hate you, reject you, insult you, and say that you are evil, all because of the Son of Man! ²³ Be glad when that happens, and dance for joy, because a great reward is kept for you in heaven. For their ancestors did the very same things to the prophets.

²⁴ “But how terrible for you who are rich now;
you have had your easy life!

²⁵ How terrible for you who are full now;
you will go hungry!

How terrible for you who laugh now;
you will mourn and weep!

²⁶ “How terrible when all people speak well of you; their ancestors said the very same things about the false prophets.

Other Readings: Jeremiah 17:5-8; Psalm 1:1-4, 6; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20



LECTIO:

Both Matthew and Luke’s gospels record an account of Jesus’ ethical teaching. There are quite a few differences between the two reports. Matthew gives Jesus’ teaching on ‘real happiness’ in nine statements – the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12).

Luke uses the technique of contrast to emphasise the points and reduces the number of different situations that Jesus says bring blessing from nine to four.

Now to the heart of Jesus’ teaching. Jesus teaches that the four situations of poverty, hunger, weeping and rejection because of him become sources of blessing. Jesus gives a completely new perspective on life and offers hope and comfort to

everyone in these circumstances. Our human nature is to try and avoid these things but Jesus warns that it is their opposites – wealth, gluttony, gloating and a ‘good’ reputation – that can be our ruin.

Perhaps the truth is written so clearly we can’t see it. These four times of difficulty can bring us into total dependence on God where our focus is completely on him. But in times of plenty it is much too easy to see ourselves and our possessions as the source of our happiness instead of pleasing God. Jesus knows otherwise and wants us to grasp the fact that God himself is our only guarantee of happiness and security.



MEDITATIO:

- What do you think about Jesus’ teaching in these verses? What strikes you most?
- Consider Matthew 6:33 ‘...be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and what he requires of you...’ How can we ensure that, whatever our circumstances, our top priority is always serving God and doing what he tells us to do?
- Think about the image of a tree planted by water in Jeremiah 17 and Psalm 1. In what ways are you putting your roots down deep into God?



ORATIO:

Pray the words of today’s responsorial verse ‘Happy are those who trust the Lord...’ (Psalm 40:4) Ask the Holy Spirit to gently reveal any areas of your life where you need to trust God more or change your priorities.

To build up your own trust try keeping a prayer notebook. Jot down your prayers each day. And then take a few minutes each week to add a comment beside each prayer as you see them answered. This is a real faith and trust builder.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Consider the example we have in Jesus. He single-mindedly listened to his Father and followed his plan.

Think about some of the ways God demonstrated his faithfulness to people in the Bible. Now think about the times God has been faithful to you personally.

OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

Luke 4:1-13

¹ Jesus returned from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit and was led by the Spirit into the desert, ² where he was tempted by the Devil for 40 days. In all that time he ate nothing, so that he was hungry when it was over.

³ The Devil said to him, "If you are God's Son, order this stone to turn into bread."

⁴ But Jesus answered, "The scripture says, 'Human beings cannot live on bread alone.'"

⁵ Then the Devil took him up and showed him in a second all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ "I will give you all this power and all this wealth," the Devil told him. "It has all been handed over to me, and I can give it to anyone I choose. ⁷ All this will be yours, then, if you worship me."

⁸ Jesus answered, "The scripture says, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!'"

⁹ Then the Devil took him to Jerusalem and set him on the highest point of the Temple, and said to him, "If you are God's Son, throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For the scripture says, 'God will order his angels to take good care of you.' ¹¹ It also says, 'They will hold you up with their hands so that not even your feet will be hurt on the stones.'"

¹² But Jesus answered, "The scripture says, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

¹³ When the Devil finished tempting Jesus in every way, he left him for a while.

Other Readings: Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Psalm 91:1-2, 10-15; Romans 10:8-13



LECTIO:

Jesus on his divine mission is led by the Holy Spirit into the desert. He stays there for forty days and fasts the whole time. Forty is significant as a time of preparation in the Old Testament. It recalls Moses fasting forty days on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:28) and the Israelites spending forty years in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 29:5-6).

We only hear about three specific temptations, but it is clear that this was not the only time Jesus was tempted: the Devil left him 'for a while' (verse 13).

The Devil tempts Jesus to use his supernatural power to meet his own physical need. Jesus rejects this misuse of his power. He identifies with you and me. We need more than just physical food. The implication is clear that we also need 'spiritual food' from God.

The Devil then offers to hand over power over the nations if Jesus will worship him. Jesus had indeed come to save people from the Devil's control, but not this way.

Lastly the Devil tempts Jesus to prove his divine nature by throwing himself off the temple so God will send his angels to rescue him.

These three temptations illustrate the core of every temptation: the desire to push God aside, to regard him secondary and redundant, to rely solely on one's own strength, and to put the world right without God.

Jesus is not deceived by the Devil's cunning deceptions even when he uses scripture itself to tempt him. Jesus rebuts every temptation with scripture, quoting successively from Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:13 and 6:16. Authentic interpretation of a portion of scripture must be consistent with the whole of scripture.

For Jesus and for us, the essence of all temptation is to be offered an appealing alternative to God's way of doing things rather than obeying him.



MEDITATIO:

- What helped Jesus reject these temptations? What lessons can we learn to help us overcome the temptations we face? Consider what 'spiritual food' will help us stay close to God.
- Jesus was single-minded about doing things God's way. He avoided being deceived into doing anything else. How can we try to follow his example?
- Consider this verse from Hebrews 4:15. What encouragement does it offer us? 'Our High Priest is not one who cannot feel sympathy for our weaknesses. On the contrary, we have a High Priest who was tempted in every way that we are, but did not sin.'



ORATIO:

The Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) reminds us to pray about temptation. Throughout the week ask God to deliver you from the things that tempt you.

Use the words from Psalm 91 to inspire your prayers today.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Spend some time treasuring the promises in Romans 10:9-11:

'If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved.' (v.9)

'Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed.' (v.11)

GOD'S CHOSEN ONE

Luke 9:28-36

²⁸ About a week after he had said these things, Jesus took Peter, John, and James with him and went up a hill to pray. ²⁹ While he was praying, his face changed its appearance, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰ Suddenly two men were there talking with him. They were Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in heavenly glory and talked with Jesus about the way in which he would soon fulfil God's purpose by dying in Jerusalem. ³² Peter and his companions were sound asleep, but they woke up and saw Jesus' glory and the two men who were standing with him. ³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, how good it is that we are here! We will make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." (He did not really know what he was saying.)

³⁴ While he was still speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them with its shadow; and the disciples were afraid as the cloud came over them. ³⁵ A voice said from the cloud, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen – listen to him!"

³⁶ When the voice stopped, there was Jesus all alone. The disciples kept quiet about all this, and told no one at that time anything they had seen.

Other Readings: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18; Psalm 27:1, 7-9, 13-14; Philippians 3:17-4:1

LECTIO:

Jesus chooses only his first three disciples – Peter, John and James - to climb a mountain with him for a prayer time. We don't know how long Jesus prays but the disciples fall asleep. It appears that the disciples wake up just in time to witness the end of a remarkable encounter. Jesus' clothes are now dazzling white and he is talking to Moses and Elijah.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah is significant. Moses led the exodus of God's people out of slavery in Egypt and many Jews expected the prophet Elijah to return before the coming of the Messiah. They talk with Jesus about how he will soon fulfil God's purpose through his death (or 'exodus', the literal meaning of Luke's writing here) in Jerusalem. God's salvation plan for mankind, bringing true and lasting deliverance, is being fulfilled in Jesus.

This experience may have strengthened Jesus for the testing days ahead that would culminate with his death on the cross. Luke makes no comment on this. What is clear is that God is present, as indicated by the cloud which veils his glory. As at Jesus' baptism, God speaks. He affirms Jesus as his Son whom he has chosen. And this time God adds the instruction to the disciples to 'listen to him'.

This event, together with the other miracles and teaching that surround it, gave the disciples glimpses of who Jesus was. But they needed to travel much further with Jesus. In fact they needed to meet him after the resurrection to really understand who he was and his mission on earth.

MEDITATIO:

- Imagine you were one of the disciples that witnessed this event. How might you have felt? What would you have learnt?
- What has Jesus been chosen for? In what way does his death in Jerusalem fulfil God's purpose?
- In what ways can we 'listen to him' as God told the disciples to do?
- What is your experience of prayer? Do you find it as easy to listen to God as to talk to him?

ORATIO:

Thank God for the words from today's responsorial Psalm:

'The Lord is my light and my salvation;'

Thank God each day this week for all the ways he has guided and saved you. Ask him to deepen your appreciation of his salvation for you.

Ask the Holy Spirit to overshadow you, to transform your life so that people around you notice something different about the way you live. Ask God to help you reflect more of Jesus to others.

CONTEMPLATIO:

Consider the glory of Jesus' transfigured body. For Christians, Paul offers us a tremendous promise, 'He will change our weak mortal bodies and make them like his own glorious body...' (Philippians 3:21).

Consider what it means that we are now 'citizens of heaven' (Philippians 3:20).