

# **CARES**

**CATHECETICAL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SERVICE**

## **EXPLORING THE WORD**



**Lectio Divina  
for those involved in education**

*Learn to fix the eye of faith  
on the divine word  
of Holy Scriptures  
as on a light shining  
in a dark place  
until the day dawns  
and the day-star  
rises in our hearts.*

*St Augustine*

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**Finding Balance (Participants' Guide) – a lectio for October**

**Cast out your net (Leader's Guide)– a lectio for November**

**Cast out your net (Participants' Guide)– a lectio for November**

**The Annunciation (Leader's Guide) - a lectio for December**

**The Annunciation (Leader's Guide) - a lectio for December**

## FOREWORD

A major document of renewal of the Second Vatican Council was *Dei Verbum* (the Word of God). It concerned the presence of God in the Holy Scriptures and therefore of their importance in the shaping of the life of every Christian.

That document opens with a wonderful image for the whole Church. It is of all the bishops of the world, gathered together with the Pope in Council, listening very attentively to what the Word of God is saying to the Church today. It is, of course, a powerful image of precisely what *Lectio Divina* is all about – listening with great reverence and attention, in prayer, to God speaking to us in the Scriptures.

*Exploring the Word* is an excellent resource for those involved in education today. It will give those who use it opportunity for pause and reflection, for praise of God and for a greater understanding of His constant presence in our daily lives. I highly recommend it and, I have no doubt, you will find it to be of great value.

+Arthur Roche  
Bishop of Leeds

Feast of St Therese of Lisieux  
1 October 2004

## INTRODUCTION

Teachers and those involved in education have always held a special place in the life of the Church. Their influence is of great significance in the formation of the minds and hearts of each new generation. Because of the crucial role they play, much has been asked and expected of those who work with the children and young people of the Church. In our society today there is a growing awareness of the key role which is played by those who work in our schools. It has been realised that, for a large number of the pupils who enrol in our schools, the school is the main, if not the only, contact they have with the Church. Our Catholic schools are in the forefront of the Church's evangelising mission and ministry.

This means that, more than ever, the community needs people in our schools who are deeply rooted in the tradition of the Church and the primary sources of that tradition is Scripture. The study of the Scripture is, therefore, of great importance: even more significant is the reflection on the texts, but of greatest importance is the praying of Scripture.

**Lectio Divina** is an ancient and important part of the Christian tradition. In it we take time to reflect on a passage from Scripture, allowing it to penetrate our hearts and minds. We strive to hear the living Word of God speaking to us. Through the exercise of Lectio we make the links between Scripture and the way we live our lives.

When using the leaflets in a group it is suggested that:

- the meeting begins with the invocation of the Holy Spirit in word or in song;
- the Word of God read slowly. The reading of the passage should be followed by a short time of silence to allow the words to rest in the heart and mind;
- participants be asked to share their initial reactions;
- the reflection should be read aloud and then time be given for silence, during which participants can re-read the reflection and have some time to absorb the ideas;
- this is followed by a time of discussion in which participants are asked to share their reactions and reflections. If necessary, the section "Points to Ponder" may be used to prompt discussion;
- when the discussion has concluded, there should be a time of silence. This might be followed by a time of shared praise and intercession;
- the gathering ends with the Lord's Prayer and a blessing prayer;
- at the end of each session there is a short phrase which it is suggested that participants might use as a source of reflection in the days following the session.

*You do not live  
on bread alone  
but on every word  
that comes  
from the mouth of God.*

*Dt. 8:3*

## **THE SOWER**

**SEPTEMBER**  
**THE START OF THE YEAR**



**LEADER'S GUIDE**

**WELCOME**

*The leader welcomes everyone to the session.*

## **CENTERING**

*Invite every one to sit comfortably, to close their eyes and establish a gentle pattern of breathing (in through the nose and out through the mouth). When the breathing pattern is established, ask participants to use the mantra "Spirit of Jesus " on the intake of breath and "pray in me" on the exhale. Allow that to continue for a minute or two.*

## **INVOCATION OF THE SPIRIT**

*As a preparation, the Holy Spirit "who prays with in us" should be invoked. This could be done by singing an appropriate chant (e.g. Spirit of the living God, Veni Sancte Spiritus) or by reciting the pray to Holy Spirit (Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.)*

## **THE WORD**

*Read the passage aloud.*

Jesus said, "Imagine a sower going out to sow. As he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up straight away, because there was no depth of earth; but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away. Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Listen, anyone who has ears!

Mt.13:4-9

He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man throws seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the crop is ready, he loses no time: he starts to reap because the harvest has come."

Mk.4:26-29

*Allow a few moments of silence then ask people to read the text again. It can be helpful if people underline or circle words or phrases which struck them.*

## **FIRST RESPONSE**

- ◆ What word or phrase caught your attention?
- ◆ Why?

## **REFLECTION**

There are obvious links between the vocation of the teacher and the famous Parable of the Sower. The teacher is called to cast the seed, which is the Word, in the field, the school, in which the vocation is being lived out. It is strange that the sower works in a field which has areas where the seed cannot survive or thrive. Logic might make one think that the sower should have spent more time preparing the field so that the crop might be productive. That, however, was not the work of the Sower, others had that responsibility.

The work of the educator is to cast the seed wide, knowing that the results would be varied. The Sower is only one part of the process through which the crop is produced but the Sower has a crucial part to play.

### **POINTS TO PONDER**

- ◆ What encouragement do you find in the parable?
- ◆ What challenge is there?
- ◆ What does the Parable have to say about the vocation of those involved in education?

### **PRAYER**

*Invite the group to voice their prayers but remind them that, if they want to pray for a pupil, names should not be used.*

*After an appropriate time conclude the prayer using this or a similar formula:*

*Let us gather all our prayers, spoken or unspoken, and offer them to God in words given to us by the Lord:*

Our Father . . .

### **A FINAL THOUGHT**

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.

The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,  
it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction  
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete,  
which is another way of saying that  
the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that should be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection,  
    no pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No programme accomplishes the Church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

That is what we are about.  
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted,  
    knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces effects  
    far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything,  
    and there is a sense of liberation in realising that.  
This enables us to do something,  
    and to do it very well.  
It may be incomplete;  
but it is a beginning,  
a step along the way,  
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter  
and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,  
    but that is the difference  
    between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders,  
    ministers, not messiahs.

Oscar Romero

## **BLESSING**

*Invite everyone to join in the blessing.*

May the Lord of the harvest  
bring growth and fruitfulness.  
May the Lord of the harvest  
plant the seed of his word  
deep in our hearts.  
May the Lord of the harvest  
guide us and lead us  
as we share his word with others.  
Amen.

## **A WORD TO TAKE WITH YOU**

Take this phrase and use it often. Let it enter you and it will begin to affect you.

Plant your word within me.

# THE SOWER

## SEPTEMBER

### THE START OF THE YEAR



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*The leader welcomes everyone to the session.*

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# **FINDING BALANCE**

# A LECTIO FOR OCTOBER



## LEADER'S GUIDE

### WELCOME

*The leader welcomes everyone to the session.*

### CENTERING

*Invite every one to sit comfortably, to close their eyes and establish a gentle pattern of breathing (in through the nose and out through the mouth). When the breathing pattern is established, ask participants to use the mantra “Calming Jesus” on the intake of breath and “I rest in you” on the exhale. Allow that to continue for a minute or two.*

## **INVOCATION OF THE SPIRIT**

*As a preparation, the Holy Spirit “who prays with in us” should be invoked. This could be done by singing an appropriate chant (e.g. Spirit of the living God, Veni Sancte Spiritus) or by reciting the pray to Holy Spirit (Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.)*

## **THE WORD**

*Read the passage aloud.*

In the course of their journey he came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord’s feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha who was distracted with all the serving said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.” But the Lord answered: “Martha, Martha,” he said “you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part; it is not to be taken from her.”

Lk 10.38-42

*Allow a few moments of silence then ask people to read the text again. It can be helpful if people underline or circle words or phrases which struck them.*

## **FIRST RESPONSE**

- ◆ What word or phrase caught your attention?
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## **REFLECTION**

Sympathies are perhaps with Martha! She knew the tasks which had to be done and she was willing to roll up her sleeves and get on with the job. It isn’t hard to understand her irritation with her sister who sat listening with rapt attention to the words of Jesus. Her words of complaint, however, are met with, what must have been for her, a somewhat harsh response.

Life in school is full, sometimes too full, of things which need to be done, and they are important things. But it is necessary to ask if the tasks sometimes take over and stop us from seeing the meaning of what we are really engaged in.

In our lives, if we are to live fully and richly, we need to find a balance between activity and stillness; giving and receiving; work and leisure. We need to find opportunities to “waste time” creatively as Mary did.

### **POINTS TO PONDER**

- Am I happy with the balance at present in my life? Does anything need to be done?
- How often do I make space for silence and reflection in my life?
- Do we provide opportunities to share stillness, listening and reflection in school?

### **PRAYER**

*Invite the group to voice their prayers.*

*After an appropriate time conclude the prayer using this or a similar formula:*

*Let us gather all our prayers, spoken or unspoken, and offer them to God in words given to us by the Lord:*

Our Father . . .

### **A FINAL THOUGHT**

Drop thy still dews of quietness,  
till all our strivings cease;  
take from our souls the strain and stress,  
and let our ordered lives confess  
the beauty of thy peace,  
the beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire  
thy coolness and thy balm;  
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;  
speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,  
O still small voice of calm!  
O still small voice of calm!

(J.G. Whittier)

### **BLESSING**

*Invite everyone to join in the blessing.*

Let nothing disturb you,  
Nothing affright you.

All things pass,  
God is unchanging,  
Patience obtains all,  
Whoever has God  
Needs nothing else,  
God alone suffices.

(Teresa of Avila)

### **A WORD TO TAKE WITH YOU**

Take this phrase and use it often. Let it enter you and it will begin to affect you.

Be still and know that I am Lord.

# FINDING BALANCE

## A LECTIO FOR OCTOBER



## THE WORD

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## **A WORD TO TAKE WITH YOU**

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Be still and know that I am Lord.

**CAST OUT YOUR NET**

**A LECTIO FOR NOVEMBER**



**LEADER'S GUIDE**

## **WELCOME**

*The leader welcomes everyone to the session.*

## **CENTERING**

*Invite every one to sit comfortably, to close their eyes and establish a gentle pattern of breathing (in through the nose and out through the mouth). When the breathing pattern is established, ask participants to use the mantra “Come Lord Jesus” on the intake of breath and “live in me” on the exhale. Allow that to continue for a minute or two.*

## **INVOCATION OF THE SPIRIT**

*As a preparation, the Holy Spirit “who prays with in us” should be invoked. This could be done by singing an appropriate chant (e.g. Spirit of the living God, Veni Sancte Spiritus) or by reciting the pray to Holy Spirit (Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.)*

## **THE WORD**

*Read the passage aloud.*

Now he was standing one day by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the crowd pressing round him listening to the word of God, when he caught sight of two boats close to the bank. The fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats – it was Simon’s – and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

When he had finished speaking he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch”. “Master,” Simon replied “we worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.” And when they had done this they netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear, so they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them; when these came, they filled the two boats to sinking point.

When Simon Peter saw this he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, “Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man! For he and all his companions were completely overcome by the catch they had made; so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon’s partners. But Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on it is people you will catch”. Then, bringing their boats back to land, they left everything and followed him.

*Allow a few moments of silence then ask people to read the text again. It can be helpful if people underline or circle words or phrases which struck them.*

## FIRST RESPONSE

- ◆ What word or phrase caught your attention?
- ◆ Why?

## REFLECTION

There are times when life in school can be quite discouraging. There are times when, no matter how hard we have worked, the results, for some classes or some individual pupils, just don't seem to be there. It is at times like that when there is a strong temptation to pack up and go home - if not physically then mentally!

But it is precisely at these times that Jesus invites us to cast out the net again. He invites us to have another go in faith. Human reasoning tells us that it is pointless to keep on trying but the divine reason and ours are not always in agreement!

God knows that there is a great catch to be had but, if it is to be found then those who have been chosen to cast out the net for the catch must keep on trying. If we do, we are promised a great reward for our labours.

## POINTS TO PONDER

- ◆ What challenges you in the story of the miraculous catch of fish?
- ◆ What consoles you?
- ◆ What does the story have to tell us about how we work as a school?

## PRAYER

*Invite the group to voice their prayers but remind them that, if they want to pray for a pupil, names should not be used.*

*After an appropriate time conclude the prayer using this or a similar formula:*

*Let us gather all our prayers, spoken or unspoken, and offer them to God in words given to us by the Lord:*

Our Father . . .

## A FINAL THOUGHT

I wish you were reasonable, Lord.  
It's fair enough to be asked to give it a go  
and I'm happy enough to go along with that;

but why do you ask me to keep on trying  
when it takes so much time  
and, all too often,  
there's precious little  
to see in return for all the effort.

Yet you ask me to cast out the net again.  
Everything that's in me  
tells me it's just a waste of time.  
At least the fishermen you spoke to  
got an immediate miracle  
it doesn't seem to happen like that for me.

Today, however, I will cast out the net  
and, with your help I will do it again tomorrow  
and the day after and the day after.  
I don't know how the miracle will happen  
but I will believe that you are at work  
and you know what the catch is that you are  
gathering through my work.

Miracles don't have to be big and flashy  
they can be small, almost imperceptible  
but they are real.

One day, Lord, may I be surprised by the miracles you have worked through  
me.

## **BLESSING**

*Invite everyone to join in the blessing.*

The God of life go with you.  
The Risen Christ beside you.  
The vibrant Spirit within you.  
Amen,  
(Celtic Worship. Ray Simpson)

## **A WORD TO TAKE WITH YOU**

Take this phrase and use it often. Let it enter you and it will begin to affect  
you.

Cast out your net.

**CAST OUT YOUR NET**

**A LECTIO FOR NOVEMBER**



## THE WORD

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*St Augustine*

# THE ANNUNCIATION

## A LECTIO FOR DECEMBER



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## THE WORD

*Read the passage aloud.*

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, "Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you." She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, "Mary do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end." Mary said to the angel, "But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?" "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" the angel answered "and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, *for nothing is impossible to God.* " "I am the handmaid of the Lord", said Mary "let what you have said be done to me." And the angel left her.

Lk.1.26-38

*Allow a few moments of silence then ask people to read the text again. It can be helpful if people underline or circle words or phrases which struck them.*

## FIRST RESPONSE

- ◆ What word or phrase caught your attention?

- ◆ Why?

## **REFLECTION**

The story of the revelation to Mary is, in one sense, a unique event. No-one had ever and no-one else will ever be invited by God to bring Christ into the world in the way in which Mary did. Hers is an amazing and unique calling. Yet, at the same time, the Annunciation is also a universal story. It is the story of every human being. Each one of us has been created in order to bring Christ into the world through the quality of our living.

As educators, part of our calling is to be the “Gabriel” in the lives of the young people with whom we live. It is our responsibility to help our pupils and students to become aware of their vocation to be Christ-bearers. We do this by helping them to become more and more conscious of their tremendous worth and of the gifts with which God has blessed them.

As we enter into the lives of our pupils we must enter as Gabriel did. Gabriel came to Mary knowing that she was God’s chosen one, recognising that God was truly with her.

The insignificant, powerless Mary, whom no-one of this world would have thought of as a world-changer, affirmed by Gabriel in her worth, becomes the one whom “all generations will call blessed”.

## **POINTS TO PONDER**

- ◆ What challenge do you find in the story of the Annunciation?
- ◆ How do we work to let each pupil know that they have cause to rejoice?
- ◆ What does the story of the Annunciation ask of me?

## **PRAYER**

*Invite the group to voice their prayers.*

*After an appropriate time conclude the prayer using this or a similar formula:*

*Let us gather all our prayers, spoken or unspoken, and offer them to God in words given to us by the Lord:*

Our Father . . .

## **A FINAL THOUGHT**

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? . . .

Give me, Lord , the insight of Elizabeth, as day by day, I am visited in my classroom by your young brothers and sisters.

And Mary said:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord  
and my spirit exults in God my saviour;  
because he has looked upon his lowly servant.  
Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed,  
for the Almighty has done great things for me.  
Holy is his name.

## **BLESSING**

*Invite everyone to join in the blessing.*

May we exult in our God  
who has chosen us to be Christ bearers.  
May we proclaim our human worth  
to all those we teach  
and let them know that truly they are blessed.

## **A WORD TO TAKE WITH YOU**

Take this phrase and use it often. Let it enter you and it will begin to affect you.

You have won God's favour!

# THE ANNUNCIATION

## A LECTIO FOR DECEMBER



### THE WORD

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of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, "Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you." She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, "Mary do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end." Mary said to the angel, "But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?" "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" the angel answered "and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, *for nothing is impossible to God.*" "I am the handmaid of the Lord", said Mary "let what you have said be done to me." And the angel left her.

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