

LECTIO DIVINA

of the Family of the Rogate

“With Christ ascended into heaven,
the disciples are sent forth in the hope of the Rogate.”



*“And behold, I am with
you always, until
the end of the age.”*

Mt 28,20

Hymn for Invocation to the Holy Spirit

Reading: Lk 24:13–35

- a. Welcoming the Word in silence
- b. Re-reading the passage personally
- c. Sharing a word or phrase that strikes you
- d. Connecting this text with other passages of Sacred Scripture
- e. Prayerful refrain (chosen as desired)

Understanding the meaning of the text

LECTIO – WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

Listening to the Word in its literal meaning and in its historical-salvific context

GUIDE: The Ascension of Jesus, which we celebrate today, teaches us that at the end of the journey lived in love and self-giving there awaits definitive life: communion with God. It also teaches us that Jesus has left us His witness, and that we, His followers, are the ones called to continue bringing to fulfillment God's plan for humanity and for the world. The Gospel presents the final encounter of the Risen Jesus with His disciples on a mountain in Galilee. The community of disciples, gathered around the Risen Lord, recognizes Him as their Lord, adores Him, and receives from Him the mission to continue in the world the witness of the Kingdom. We may dare to say that the disciples receive the **Rogate** as mission: to go forth into the world, to be laborers in the harvest, to baptize and accompany the birth of new laborers throughout the earth.

May the Holy Spirit guide us in this time of meditation and prayer.

L1: The Acts of the Apostles is addressed to communities living in a certain context of crisis. We are in the 80s, about fifty years after the death of Jesus. The phase of expecting the imminent coming of the glorious Christ to establish the Kingdom has already passed, and there is a certain disappointment. Doctrinal questions create confusion; monotony fosters a Christian life with little commitment, and the communities settle into mediocrity; enthusiasm and dedication are lacking... The overall picture is one of a certain frustration, because the world remains the same and the long-awaited victorious intervention of God continues to be delayed. When will God's saving plan be fully and unmistakably fulfilled?

L2: It is within this environment that we can situate the text proposed to us today as the first reading. In it, Luke makes clear that the plan of salvation and liberation which Jesus came to reveal has now (after Jesus' return to the Father) been entrusted to the Church, animated by the Spirit. The building up of the Kingdom is a task not yet completed, one that must be carried forward in history and requires the continual commitment of all believers. Christians are invited to rediscover their role: to bear witness to God's plan in fidelity to the "way" Jesus Himself walked.

L3: The Letter to the Ephesians is probably one of the examples of a "circular letter" sent to various churches of Asia Minor at a time when Paul is in prison. Its bearer is a certain Tychicus. We are around the years 58–60. Some see in this Letter a kind of synthesis of Pauline theology, written at a moment when the apostle's mission in the East is practically completed. The passage proposed to us today appears in the first part of the Letter and forms part of a thanksgiving in which Paul gives thanks to God for the faith of the Ephesians and for the charity they show toward all their brothers and sisters in the faith.

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L4: The Gospel text places us in Galilee after the resurrection of Jesus (although it does not specify whether this is long or shortly after the discovery of the empty tomb—cf. Mt 28:1–15). According to Matthew, Jesus—shortly before being arrested—had set an appointment with the disciples in Galilee (cf. Mt 26:32); on Easter morning, the angels who appeared to the women at the tomb (cf. Mt 28:7), and Jesus Himself, alive and risen (cf. Mt 28:10), renew the invitation for the disciples to go to Galilee to meet the Lord there.

L5: Galilee—the northern region of Palestine—was a prosperous and well-populated area, with fertile and well-cultivated land. Its geographical position made it a crossroads of many peoples; thus, a significant number of pagans formed part of its population. The coexistence of pagan and Jewish populations meant that the Jews of Galilee lived their religion differently from the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea: the daily presence of pagans likely led the Galileans to soften their observance of the Law and to interpret more broadly the rules concerning, for example, ritual impurities contracted through contact with non-Jews.

This, however, caused the Jews of Jerusalem to despise the Jews of Galilee and to believe that from Galilee "nothing good could come."

GUIDE: And yet, it was precisely in Galilee that Jesus lived almost His entire life. It was also in Galilee that He began to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom and began gathering around Himself a group of disciples (cf. Mt 4:12–22). For Matthew, this fact suggests that the liberating proclamation of Jesus has a universal dimension: it is destined for both Jews and pagans. Matthew situates this final encounter between the Risen Jesus and the disciples on "the mountain which Jesus had indicated to them." It is, however, a mountain in Galilee impossible to identify geographically, but one that Matthew perhaps connects with the mountain of the temptation (cf. Mt 4:8) and the mountain of the Transfiguration (cf. Mt 17:1). In any case, in the Old Testament the "mountain" is always the place where God reveals Himself to humanity.

MEDITATIO – WHAT DOES THE WORD SAY TO US?

Exegetical, pastoral, and Rogationist foundation

GUIDE: In this *Lectio*, let us pause to meditate on the Gospel. The passage that recounts the final encounter between Jesus and the disciples is divided into two parts. In the first (vv. 16–18), the encounter itself is described. Jesus, living and risen, reveals Himself to the disciples; and the disciples recognize Him as **the Lord** and adore Him. After describing their act of adoration, Matthew adds an expression that some translate as “*but some doubted*”, while others render it as “*they who had doubted*” (grammatically, both translations are possible). In the first case, the expression would mean that faith is not a scientific certainty and does not exclude the presence of doubt; in the second case, the expression would allude to that persistent doubt of the disciples—expressed at various moments along the journey to Jerusalem—which here finally loses all justification.

L1: Following the disciples’ recognition and adoration comes a manifestation of the mystery of Jesus, reflecting the faith of Matthew’s community:

Jesus is the **Kyrios**, who possesses all authority over the world and over history;

Jesus is the **Teacher**, whose teaching will always remain the point of reference for the disciples;

Jesus is **God-with-us**, who will accompany the disciples step by step along their journey through history.

L2: In the second part (vv. 19–20), Matthew describes the sending forth of the disciples on mission into the world. The Church of Jesus is, in its very essence, a missionary community, whose mission is to bear witness in the world to the offer of salvation and liberation that Jesus came to bring to humanity and has entrusted to the hands and hearts of His disciples. The first characteristic of this sending and mandate is **its universality**... The mission of the disciples is directed to “**all nations**”, to the whole harvest.

L3: The second characteristic reflects the two stages of Christian initiation known to Matthew’s community: **teaching** and **baptism**. It began with catechesis, whose content was the words and deeds of Jesus (the disciple always began with the catechumenate, which provided the foundations of Jesus’ message).

Once the disciples were instructed in the teaching of Jesus, baptism followed—sealing the intimate bond of the disciple with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It was the act of adhesion to the proposal previously presented.

GUIDE: One final note: Jesus will always be with His disciples, “**until the end of the age.**” This affirmation expresses the conviction—shared by all the believers of Matthew’s community—that the Risen Jesus will always remain with His Church, accompanying the community of disciples along its journey through history, helping it to overcome crises and the difficulties encountered on the way.

In the silence of prayer, let us allow ourselves to be questioned by the Word, and let us welcome these reflections in truth, so that the light of Christ may illumine and guide our path.

1. Jesus has gone to the Father after a life spent in service of the harvest; He has entrusted to His disciples the mission of proclaiming the Kingdom. To celebrate the Ascension of Jesus means, first of all, to become aware of the mission entrusted to the disciples and to feel responsible for making the Kingdom present in the life of humanity.

Am I aware that the Church—the community of Jesus’ disciples to which I also belong—is today the saving presence of Jesus in the midst of the world? How do I seek to bear witness to the Kingdom in my daily life—at home, at work or school, in the parish, in the religious community?

2. The mission Jesus entrusted to His disciples is a universal mission: borders, races, and cultural differences cannot become obstacles to the Gospel in the world.

Am I aware that the mission entrusted to the disciples is universal? Do I recognize that Jesus sends me to all people—without distinction of race, ethnicity, religious, social, or economic differences—to announce to them salvation and the promise of eternal life?

3. To become a disciple means, first of all, to learn the teachings of Jesus—beginning with His words, His gestures, and His life offered in love.

Do I make an effort to know these teachings well and to apply them in my daily life?

4. On the day I was baptized, I entered into a covenant with Jesus and was bound to the communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Has my life been coherent with this commitment? Do I strive to live my vocation in holiness and to collaborate with all those who are walking their own path of discernment before the Lord's call?

SHARING THE WORD

GUIDE: To bear witness today in the world to the values of the Kingdom is an immense challenge—values that often stand in contradiction to what the world upholds and considers life's priorities. Confrontation with the world frequently generates disappointment, suffering, and frustration in the disciples... Yet in moments of discouragement and disillusionment, it is fitting to recall the words of Jesus: **"I am with you always, until the end of the age."** This certainty must sustain and nourish the courage with which we bear witness to what we believe.

Enlightened by the Word, let us share.

Moment of Sharing.

ORATIO – WHAT DO WE SAY TO GOD?

Responding to the Word that has visited us

Guide: Lord Jesus, exalted to the glory of the Father, today we contemplate You not as the One who withdraws from us, but as the One who remains with us every day and continues to send Your Church to the very ends of the earth.

1st Choir

Open, O Lord, our hearts to the light of Your Spirit,
that we may recognize the hope of the call You have placed within our lives.
Do not allow us to remain standing still, gazing only toward heaven,
but make us descend onto the soil of mission,
where so many brothers and sisters await a word of comfort,
a gesture of care,
a presence that proclaims Your love.

2nd Choir

Lord of the harvest,
awaken in the hearts of the young the courage to respond to Your call.
Call forth even today disciples and witnesses of the Gospel,
men and women who will consecrate their lives to the service of the Kingdom—

to proclaim, to teach, to heal, to evangelize,
and to make visible the tenderness of Your Heart.

1st Choir

Grant Your Church holy vocations:
priests after Your own Heart,
religious men and women inflamed with apostolic zeal,
families open to life and to faith,
lay men and women committed to the mission.
May no one close their heart to Your voice;
may no one fear to follow You;
may no one keep for themselves the gifts they have received.

2nd Choir

Through the charism of the Rogate,
teach us to pray with confidence:
“Send, O Lord, holy apostles into Your Church.”
And make of us, too, a living answer to this prayer,
so that, strengthened by the Holy Spirit,
we may be witnesses of Your presence
and joyful servants of the harvest.
Amen.

CONTEMPLATIO – WHAT DOES THE WORD DO WITHIN US?

Silent Adoration; welcoming the mystery

Guide: After listening to the Word, meditating on it, and responding in prayer, we are now invited to remain in silence before the Lord Jesus—exalted into heaven and, at the same time, mysteriously present in the midst of His Church.

In this silence, filled with the presence of the glorious Lord, let us welcome the grace of being sent as witnesses, intercessors, and servants of the harvest. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to awaken within us a more generous response to God’s call and a more ardent prayer for vocations.

- Let us place ourselves before Jesus Christ, the glorified Lord, who ascends to the Father carrying with Him our redeemed humanity.
- Let us contemplate the disciples gathered on the mountain: fragile, still marked by doubt, yet chosen and sent by the Risen One.
- Let us allow the Lord’s promise to resound in our hearts: **“I am with you always”**—a source of courage for every vocation and mission.
- Let us remain in silence before Christ, who does not abandon His Church but continues to be present in the Word, in the Eucharist, in the community, and in the mission.
- Let us welcome the light of the Holy Spirit, that He may open the eyes of our hearts and help us understand the hope of the call we have received.
- Let us contemplate the Lord’s harvest: so many hearts awaiting consolation, so many young people needing to hear the voice of God, so many communities in need of holy apostles.
- In the silence of the heart, let us unite ourselves to the **Rogate**, and implore the Lord of the harvest to send priests, religious men and women, missionaries, holy families, and lay faithful committed to the Kingdom.

- Remaining in the presence of the glorified Christ, let us welcome the call to live as a Church that goes forth—witnesses of hope, intercessors for vocations, and servants of the mission He continues to entrust to us.

ACTIO – HOW DOES THE WORD MOVE US INTO LIFE?

The Word becomes action; the Gospel becomes choice

Guide: The unity between the Acts of the Apostles, the Letter to the Ephesians, and the Gospel of Matthew may be expressed in this way: the Christian is a disciple of the Risen Lord, called to live with eyes lifted toward the glory of Christ, yet with feet firmly planted in the mission He entrusts to His Church. In Matthew, the Risen One sends forth: **“Go, and make disciples,”** promising to remain with us every day. In the horizon of the Rogate, this Word moves us to **pray, bear witness, and serve** the harvest, so that the Church may be enriched with holy apostles, generous hearts, and willing vocations.

Before the Word, we are called to:

Living with hearts lifted to Christ and feet firmly set in mission

- Cultivate each day the awareness that the glorious Christ remains with us and sustains our journey.
- Avoid a comfortable faith that gazes only toward heaven but does not engage in the mission on earth.
- Embrace with responsibility the small daily sendings: in the community, in the family, at school, at work, in pastoral service, and in care for the most vulnerable.

Welcoming the Holy Spirit as the strength of our vocation

- Ask daily for the light of the Spirit to recognize the hope of the call God has placed in our lives.
- Allow the Spirit to purify fears, resistances, weariness, and insecurities that weaken our vocational response.
- Pray for the young, that they may discern with freedom and courage God’s call to priestly, religious, missionary, family, and lay life.

Being witnesses of Christ’s presence every day

- Guard in our hearts the Lord’s promise: **“I am with you always,”** especially in moments of dryness, difficulty, or doubt.
- Live our vocation with joy, so that others may recognize in our witness the beauty of following Jesus.
- Transform this *Lectio Divina* into a concrete commitment:
 - pray this week for a specific vocation,
 - encourage someone in their journey of faith,
 - renew before God our own availability for the mission.

Each one personally acknowledges the fruits of the Lectio.

CONCLUSION OF THE LECTIO DIVINA

GUIDE: The liturgy of the Ascension of the Lord places before us the Risen Christ who ascends to the Father, yet does not abandon His Church. He promises the Holy Spirit, opens us to the hope of the call, and sends us to make disciples of all peoples, assuring us of His presence: **“I am with you always.”** In the spirit of the Rogate, this Word awakens within us the awareness that the harvest continues to be great and in need of holy apostles, paschal witnesses, praying hearts, and willing missionaries. With Mary, Mother of the Church and Mother of Vocations, let us pray:

1st CHOIR:

We thank You for Mary, Woman of faith and hope, who remained united to the mystery of Christ from the Incarnation to Easter, and accompanied the nascent Church in the expectation of the Holy Spirit. In her we contemplate the faithful disciple, the willing servant, the Mother who teaches the Church to treasure the Word, to persevere in prayer, and to respond generously to God's call.

2nd CHOIR:

O Virgin of the Rogate, Mother of the Church and Mother of Vocations, teach us not to remain standing, gazing at the sky, but to live with hearts lifted to God and feet firmly set in mission. Accompany our communities, our families, our young people, our religious, our priests, our missionaries, and our lay faithful, that all may listen to the voice of the Lord, welcome the strength of the Holy Spirit, and become joyful witnesses of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

ALL:

Mother of the Risen One and Mother of Vocations, intercede for us, that—enlightened by the hope of the call, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, and sustained by the presence of Christ—we may live as missionary disciples and servants of the harvest. Make of our Rogationist Family a praying, Eucharistic, and apostolic people, always attentive to the needs of the Church and the world. With Saint Hannibal Mary Di Francia, we lift to the Father the supplication that flows from the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus: **“Send, O Lord, holy apostles into Your Church!”** Through Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

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