

Good Mourning Ministry

Lectio Divina

A Reflection on the 23rd Psalm

Through the Lens of Grief and Mourning

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Lectio Divina, or divine reading, is a form of prayer. There are five steps to praying in this way. First, reading a passage carefully and slowly from the Bible. Second, praying with the passage as if you are having a loving conversation with God. Next, meditating or thinking deeply about what you read. Then, resting in silence and finally, a call to action in realizing what God is calling you to do.

This Divine Reading is a reflection on Psalm 23, the Psalm of David, in which the Lord is our Shepherd, guiding us and tending to our needs. Pray with this through the lens of grief and mourning following the five steps above; *Read, Pray, Meditate, Rest, Act*. First, read the 23rd Psalm in its entirety from the Bible. Then, pray as it is broken down into five separate paragraphs; each one with a different perspective. Sit in silence and listen for the Lord. Finish with a call to action which in one word is, TRUST.

Find a prayerful place. Still your mind, get comfortable, relax your posture, take a few calming breaths, and begin this Lectio Divina journey with our Good Shepherd, who is loving you, right now.

READ - PSALM 23:

“The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack. In green pastures he makes me lie down; to still waters he leads me; he restores my soul. He guides me along right paths for the sake of his name. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me. You set a table before me in front of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue me all the days of my life; I will dwell in the house of the LORD for endless days.”

PRAY:

“The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.”

How can this be so when we lack the embrace of those we've loved and lost? Life, now, feels lacking like never before. There are moments, Lord, when we wonder where our Shepherd went - like a lost sheep.

(PAUSE & REFLECT)

“In green pastures he makes me lie down; to still waters he leads me; he restores my soul.”

This sounds so refreshing. As if You've found us Lord. We, your lost sheep; bringing us to a safe place of refreshment and restoration. Our souls thirst for so many things.

(PAUSE & REFLECT)

“He guides me along right paths for the sake of his name. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me.”

Lord, we need to be comforted. Our world has been turned upside down. Yes, the valley is dark now because death has entered. So, to find a new path ahead, we need Your light - the light that shines in the darkness, the darkness will never overcome.

(PAUSE & REFLECT)

“You set a table before me in front of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”

Lord, in baptism we were anointed with oil making us sons and daughters in Christ. In Confirmation we were anointed again, sealed with an indelible mark on our souls so our character, strengthened by the Spirit, could be more readily conformed - through grace - to that of Christ's.

Helps us then, through these sacramental graces, to pray with boldness and to ask for an outpouring of sanctifying grace. Lord, your grace is power. Power we need to help us mourn. The enemy, evil, seeks to use our times of weakness for his gain - to create doubt in the promises of Christ.

Help us to not just believe, but to know, that while we struggle, Jesus has conquered death, and one day we will be reunited with our loved ones.

The Lord's promise is made clear in Romans 8:35 - 39. "What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?...No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(PAUSE & REFLECT)

"Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue me all the days of my life; I will dwell in the house of the LORD for endless days.

This word PURSUE. It sounds exhausting, to pursue, in the midst of grief; when we are too tired to pursue much of anything. The Lord, however and thankfully, is relentless in His pursuit of us. This poem, written in Adoration, titled "Pursue Me Lord" ...calls upon the Lord to keep after us.

*I beg You, Lord, for peace beyond understanding,
When my life is unimaginably demanding.
Lift me up so that I can see,
A way to keep going and believe...*

*That You are mightier than all on my plate,
And have chosen for me a heavenly fate,
Upon which to focus amidst struggle and strife,
That threatens my joy in daily life.*

*So please hear me Lord, in my moments of need,
And renew in me a strength upon which to feed,
When my soul is weakened and tired and scared,
For tomorrow may call me to more than I've bared.*

*Bring me light in the darkness of grief and heartbreak,
Shower grace upon me as I doubt how much more I can take.
Keep rescuing me while I carry my cross,
Keep pursuing me when I feel nothing but lost.*

(swpo 2018)

MEDITATE:

What is the Lord asking of me? Where does He want my focus to be? In the midst of my grief and mourning, what plans and ideas does He want me to hold on to and let go of?

REST:

Pause and reflect in silence. Listen for a Word. Listen for the Lord.

ACT:

Pope Benedict reflected on the 23rd Psalm in St. Peter's Square on October 5th, 2011. October 5th is the Feast Day of St. Faustina, from whom the Divine Mercy Chaplet originates. She is a model of complete trust in God. Pope Benedict said, "Turning to the Lord in prayer implies a radical act of trust in the awareness that one is entrusting oneself to God who is good...this Psalm is totally imbued with trust...Psalm 23 invites us to renew our trust in God, abandoning ourselves totally in his hands..."

This is our call to action.

As the Psalmist David invites us to, let us trust that our Good Shepherd is at work, now, in our midst. He is tending to our needs, we...his grieving flock. He is reaching out to us as we lay our struggles at His Feet.

Let us trust that the Holy Spirit, who dwells within and among us, will help us to abandon ourselves into the Hands of our Good Shepherd who guides and comforts us, restores our souls, leads us to still waters, anoints us, and will bring us into His sheepfold.

Renew our trust, in a special way at Mass, that the Readings, the Gospel, the homily, the music, the prayers, the candle light, the Sanctuary lamp, and our being in fellowship with one another, will bring us comfort and peace. Restore our trust that in receiving the Eucharist, our eyes meet with Christ's, surrounded by the Angels and Saints, while our loved ones gaze at us as they journey home to heaven.

We will trust, in our Good Shepherd's grace, that our healing cup will overflow.

Amen.