

## **Lectio orante for the Year of the Bible**

“That the Word of the Lord may speed forward” (2 Th. 3:1)

*The Lectio should take place in a church, chapel or another place suitable for the occasion. It is necessary to have on hand a volume of the Bible (preferably a big one) and a stand placed in the center of the sanctuary, in front of the altar, so that the open book is visible to the whole assembly. The stand should be decorated appropriately (e.g., with flowers). Two lighted candles can be placed on each side of the stand during the enthronement of the Bible.*

*Depending on how the service unfolds, it will be necessary, before the Lectio begins, to:*

*– prepare and distribute slips of paper and pencils or pens to each participant, and to also have on hand a small basket to collect the slips;*

*–prepare small pieces of paper bearing the names of the countries in which Christians are being persecuted (these should be distributed during the prayer). For the list of these countries, please consult <https://www.porteaperteitalia.org/persecuzione/>*

*The Lectio is divided into five moments: enthronement of the Bible, invocation of the Holy Spirit, proclamation and listening to the text, meditation of the text (allowing oneself to be enlightened, questioned and involved in the Word), concluding prayer.*

### **1.**

#### **Enthronement of the Bible**

*Three duly-appointed people should stand ready at the entrance to the chapel. One of these individuals is to carry the closed Bible aloft at face level. The other two persons carry lighted candles. As the assembly sings, the procession makes its way to the altar. The person carrying the Bible takes the lead, with the two candle-bearers walking beside or immediately behind him/her. The Bible is opened and placed on the stand facing the assembly. The candles are placed on the sides of the stand.*

*If a suitable stand is not available in the chapel or church, the open Bible is placed on the altar.*

*A song is sung, followed by a brief moment of silent recollection.*

*For the song we suggest: La Parola nel cuore by Marco Frisina (found in the song book Tu sei il Cristo, FSP Editions Italy, 2013), or else Signore, tu hai parole di vita eterna by Giovanni Maria Rossi (found in the song book Parola di Dio. Canti per la celebrazione della Parola, FSP Editions Italy, 2018) or another song.*

### **2.**

#### **Invocation of the Holy Spirit**

*To be proclaimed by the guide and assembly:*

**G:** Divine Holy Spirit, eternal Love of the Father and of the Son,

**A:** we adore you, we love you, we beseech you:

**G:** Spirit of forgiveness,

**A:** heal the wounds caused by sin.

**G:** Spirit of truth,

**A:** enlighten our minds and help us know Jesus Christ.

**G:** Sanctifying Spirit,

**A:** guide our wills and conform us to the Father’s plan.

**G:** Life-giving Spirit,

**A:** transform our hearts and fill them with divine love.

### 3.

#### **Proclamation of the Text**

*The reading is proclaimed from the lectern. If the Lectio does not take place in a chapel or church but somewhere else, the reading is proclaimed standing in front of the assembly if possible.*

#### **From the Second Letter of St. Paul Apostle to the Thessalonians (2:13–3:5)**

We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us, so that *the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified everywhere*, just as it is among you, and that we may be rescued from evil and wicked people, for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

**The Word of the Lord.**

*Moment of silent reflection*

### 4.

#### **Meditation of the Text**

##### **a. Suggestion for letting oneself be enlightened by the Word**

*The suggestion for reflection is read aloud by a second reader or else left to personal reading:*

At the time when the Second Letter to the Thessalonians was written, the Christians of this community had already experienced what it means to suffer for the Kingdom of God (cf. 2 Th. 1:6). The Apostle therefore encourages them to persevere and assures them of his prayers (2 Th. 1:1-12). However, it seems that some had allowed themselves to be excited and seduced by false promises that the second coming of Jesus was imminent. There were even those who abandoned themselves to idleness and laziness (cf. 2 Th. 3:6) and the Apostle does not hesitate to correct this state of affairs (2 Th. 2:1-12 and 3:6-15).

But the author of the letter does not succumb to pessimism despite the gravity of the situation and the rather severe tone of his words. On the contrary, his heart is filled with confidence in God and he is firmly convinced of the vocation he received. The phrase that was chosen as a reference point for the Year of the Bible can be found in the final exhortation of the letter, where Paul gives thanks for the call to service of the Gospel and emphasizes trust in the power of God.

The motivation “that the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified” is entrusted to the recipients of the letter—and also to us—as a prayer intention. In fact, the positive outcome of evangelization in every time and every geographical area is not guaranteed by our ability and effectiveness but by the fidelity and providence of the Lord.

**b. Suggestion for letting oneself be questioned by the Word**

*The excerpts from the text are proclaimed aloud by one person, while the questions that follow are left to personal reflection.*

*If it is considered appropriate to let the questions echo more deeply within each participant, they can be read aloud by a different person. The attitudes or gestures suggested below can be adapted or omitted, depending on the needs of the assembly.*

***We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord...***

What are your reasons for gratitude to the Lord for his actions in your personal story and in the story of the Pauline Family?

*We present them to the Lord in silent personal prayer or else share them aloud.*

***God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit...***

Who was for you personally *the first fruits for salvation*—a credible witness of faith and of the Pauline vocation? Recall in your heart the people who helped you to recognize the voice of the Lord in your life.

*Write the names of these people on the slips of paper that were distributed before the Lectio began. The folded slips should be placed in an empty basket next to the enthroned Bible while a song suited to the occasion is sung (for example: the Magnificat or Taizé's Ubi caritas).*

***So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught...***

What message or word from Sacred Scripture has been a particular source of light for you on your journey?

*If considered appropriate, the participants can share these aloud.*

***We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things that we command.***

Our life does not lack moments of devitalization, forgetfulness or indifference in which we risk neglecting the gift we received and our response to our call weakens. Open your heart to the Lord's mercy and ask for forgiveness.

**Song:** Taizé's *Misericordias Domini* (Musica Sacra 2015) or another appropriate song.

**c. Suggestions for letting oneself become involved in the Word**

*The participants can choose between the following two options, depending on the needs and sensibilities of the assembly:*

***Brothers and sisters, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified, just as it is among you...***

In society, in the Church and also in daily life, there are many moments, situations or relationships that prevent the Word of the Lord from speeding forward because it is imprisoned by our closures. Let us ask the Lord to enlighten and free us with his grace, responding to each intercession with the plea: *Lord, confirm us in goodness.*

*Spontaneous prayer intentions.*

*Or else:*

Today too, there are many countries in the world in which the Word of the Lord cannot speed forward, cannot be freely proclaimed and is not glorified. Let us pray for the countries in which the disciples of Jesus are persecuted: North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Pakistan, Eritrea, Sudan, Yemen,

Iran, India, Syria, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, Uzbekistan, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Turkmenistan, China....

*While instrumental music is played, each participant is given a country to carry in prayer "that the Word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified."*

*Distribution of the slips of paper is followed by spontaneous intercessions.*

*At the conclusion of the intercessions, the assembly prays together: Our Father...*

## 5.

### **Concluding Prayer**

*The prayer should be recited slowly by the whole assembly or else by two alternating groups.*

God, our Father, we thank you for the many brothers and sisters  
whom you loved and chose as first fruits  
to bear witness to us of your truth.

We thank you for those who announced the Gospel to us.

We thank you for those who roused us to enthusiasm for the Faith.

*Instrumental music*

Lord, Jesus Christ,

you are our consolation and our hope.

Guide us along the path you have marked out for us.

Replace our thoughts of discouragement with your thoughts of trust in the Father.

Replace our words of rancor with your words of mercy.

Replace our self-absorption with your works of love.

*Instrumental music*

Holy Spirit, love of the Father and of the Son,

guard and protect us from the evil one and firmly root us in all that is good.

Comfort our hearts and fill them with love, patience and goodness.

Prevent us from being enslaved by corruption and wickedness.

Set us free from everything that blocks us from following Jesus.

Be light and guidance for all who believe in the Gospel,

so that the Word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified.

*Instrumental music*

Glory to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen.

*If a priest or deacon is present, the Lectio concludes with a blessing of the assembly with the Bible. Otherwise, each participant makes the sign of the cross on his/her forehead, while the guide accompanies the gesture with these words:*

**G:** May the Lord bless us. May his Word and his Face shine upon us.

**A:** Amen.

**G:** Go in peace.

**A:** Thanks be to God.

*Before disbanding, the assembly sings an appropriate song. We suggest: Marco Frisina, Andate in tutto il mondo (found in: O Luce radiosa, FSP Editions Italy, 2007), or: Anna Mara Galliano - A. Parisi, Chiesa che annuncia, or another suitable song.*