

Lectio Divina: Prepare a way for the Lord



Lectio Divina – Listening to God’s Word with our hearts

“And the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us”

In Imaginative Contemplation we pray with the Scriptures, allowing Christ in the Scriptures to speak to us through our imagination. In Lectio Divina we pray with the Scriptures by dwelling on God’s word by listening with our heart. In Imaginative Contemplation, Jesus’ words, actions, teaching and relationships with people become familiar to us when we enter into the Scripture passage using our imagination. In Lectio Divina, God’s word becomes familiar to us by listening with our hearts and dwelling on His words. Listening with our hearts is something we do automatically in everyday life when we for example dwell on the beauty of nature or listening to someone we love or recall a poignant memory.

Lectio Divina or divine reading has four parts: reading, repeating, responding and resting.

Reading: Begin by reading the Scripture Passage slowly until a word or a phrase resonates with you. Then stop for the moment.

Repeating: Dwell on the words you have chosen. Repeat them again and again as though God is saying them to you. Try not to

analyse them, just let them speak to you. Savour the words.

Responding: Allow God's heart to speak to your heart. He wants to be close to you so ask yourself what this invitation could mean. Speak to God with your heart. Be open to what he is trying to reveal to you. Share with God whatever is coming into your heart and mind.

Resting: Rest in the embrace and love of God. It is God's response to us. Your whole being is focussed on God so dwell in the moment. When you feel ready, move on.

As you listen to the following passage, note which parts move you but don't analyse anything. Then when you are ready, **read, repeat, respond and rest** and when you have dwelt on the words that initially resonated with you, continue on reading the passage and repeat the process.

Reading Isaiah 40:1-5.9-11

'Console my people, console them' says your God.

'Speak to the heart of Jerusalem

and call to her that her time of service is ended,

that her sin is atoned for,

that she has received from the hand of the Lord

double punishment for all her crimes.'

A voice cries, 'Prepare in the wilderness a way for the Lord.

Make a straight highway for our God across the desert.

Let every valley be filled in,

every mountain and hill be laid low,

let every cliff become a plain,

and the ridges a valley;

then the glory of Yahweh shall be revealed and all mankind shall see it;

for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.'

Go up on a high mountain,

joyful messenger to Zion.

Shout with a loud voice,

joyful messenger to Jerusalem.

Shout without fear, say to the towns of Judah,

'Here is your God'.

Here is the Lord coming with power,

his arm subduing all things to him.

The prize of his victory is with him,

his trophies all go before him.
He is like a shepherd feeding his flock,
gathering lambs in his arms,
holding them against his breast
and leading to their rest the mother ewe.

Questions for Reflection

1. What word, sentence or phrase most caught your attention?
2. Like Isaiah,,do you feel consoled by the thought that God is near?
3. Have you started preparing a way for the coming of Jesus this Advent? If so how?
4. Are you shouting with joy or shouting with fear at the coming of our Saviour?
5. What does being prepared mean to you? Does it mean being prepared for your Christmas shopping and all the business that comes with Christmas time or does it mean being prepared spiritually to receive Jesus at Christmas?
6. Do you think that this Advent, you may be called to be that “voice in the wilderness” bringing hope and peace to those in need? In what ways do you think you can do this?

Let us now spend 10 minutes in quiet Reflection

End Prayer

Let us pray that during this Advent Season, we keep our focus on Christ. by preparing a way for Christ's coming and bear witness to his presence among us.

Pope Francis tells us “Sorrow and fear can be replaced with joy, for the Lord himself will guide his people on the way to liberation and salvation. How will He do all this? With the solicitude and tenderness of a shepherd who takes care of his flock.”

The “O” Antiphons

A series of seven ancient antiphons, called the “O” Antiphons, feature in the last seven days of Advent (Dec 17 – 24) – the Octave before Christmas. They express the Church’s faith and each one highlights a different title for the Messiah. Each one also refers to the prophecy of Isaiah looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. They are used at Mass as verses before the Gospel and are also said before the Magnificat in Evening Prayer. They can also become our own prayer as we wait expectantly this Advent for the birth of Christ..

O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge!

O Leader of the House of Israel, giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:
come to rescue us with your mighty power!

O Root of Jesse’s stem, sign of God’s love for all his people:
come to save us without delay!

O Key of David, opening the gates of God’s eternal Kingdom:
come and free the prisoners of darkness!

O Radiant Dawn, splendour of eternal light, sun of justice:
come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death!

O King of all nations and keystone of the Church:
come and save us, whom you formed from the dust!

O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law:
come to save us, Lord our God!

Scripture texts: from the Jerusalem Bible 1966 by Dartington Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday and Company Ltd