

## Lectio Divina: The Lord is with you



### 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      Luke 1:26 - 38**

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.

## Questions for Reflection on Luke 1:26 – 38, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent

1. What word, sentence or phrase most caught your attention? What struck you the most about the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary? In what ways has God visited you in your own life and are you prepared to welcome him?
2. God has called Mary in an unexpected and unlikely way. Can you think of examples in your own life when God has called you in a way that seems out of the blue and perhaps impossible? Do you too ask, "How can this come about?" Are you afraid?
3. Mary listened attentively to what the Angel had to say. How do you listen out for what God is saying to you?
4. Mary said 'Let what you have said be done to me.' How open are you to God's call, to saying "yes" to God? Are you willing to trust him?
5. The word of God became incarnate in Mary. How has the word of God become incarnate in you and in the life of the community?

Let us now spend 10 minutes in quiet Reflection

### End Prayer

Let us pray on this 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent that like Mary, we can say "Yes" to God's invitation in faith, in hope and in trust.. Let us pray that we, like Mary can be open to God, by listening to his Word through Scripture, through the Sacrament of the Mass, through the people and events around us. Let us pray that we have the faith to believe God is already with us and dwells among us and that we can be more loving and reach out to others.

Pope Francis tells us: "Mary's faith, her attitude of faith, which consists in listening to the Word of God in order to abandon herself to this Word with full willingness of mind and heart. Responding to the Angel, Mary said: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word" (v. 38). In her "behold" filled with faith, Mary does not know by what road she must venture, what pains she must suffer, what risks she must face. But she is aware that it is the Lord asking and she entrusts herself totally to Him; she abandons herself to his love. This is the faith of Mary!

## 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