

Lectio Divina: The Greatest of these is Love



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 1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13

Be ambitious for the higher gifts. And I am going to show you a way that is better than any of them.

If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fullness, to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatever.

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes.

Love does not come to an end. But if there are gifts of prophecy, the time will come when they must fail; or the gift of languages, it will not continue for ever; and knowledge – for this, too, the time will come when it must fail. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will disappear.

When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and think like a child, and argue like a child, but now I am a man, all childish ways are put behind me. Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror; but then we shall be seeing face to face. The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known.

In short, there are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.

Questions for Reflection

1. In this very rich and powerful text, what word, sentence or phrase most caught your attention?
2. What word, sentence or phrase most challenged you?
3. What word, sentence or phrase most comforted you?
4. St Paul talks about a love that goes beyond sensual love (eros) and the love of friendship (philia). This love, '*Agape*', is about reaching out to another person, being concerned about their well-being. It is a love of compassion, caring and is unconditional. A love that extends to everyone, those who have wronged us, those whom we regard as enemies. How does this challenge you? Does it make you feel uncomfortable, unachievable?
5. Think of your own God-given gifts, given to us out of his unconditional love, '*Agape*', for us. Do you use these gifts with love for the well-being of others? What are the obstacles that keep you from using your gifts for the welfare of others?
6. Think of the love you show others. Is it patient, kind, ready to excuse? Is it given in trust, in hope, and does it endure whatever comes? Can it be boastful, rude, selfish, jealous or conceited? Do you strive for the love that is God? A love that is eternal? A love that will outlive all your gifts?
7. Do you recall Jesus when reading this passage, that he was the most loving person who ever lived and displayed '*agape*' to all he met, and yet was rejected, hated and crucified

because of this? He endured this rejection and death for our salvation. This is true 'agape'

Let us now spend 10 minutes in quiet Reflection and let the words of this passage speak to us.

End Prayer Your Love

Bless us with Love, O Merciful God;
That we may Love as you Love!
That we may show patience, tolerance,
Kindness, caring and love to all!
Give me knowledge; O giver of Knowledge,
That I may be one with my Universe and Mother Earth!
O Compassionate One, grant compassion unto us;
That we may help all fellow souls in need!
Bless us with your Love O God.
Bless us with your Love.

- Author Unknown

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