

Lectio Divina: How often must I forgive my brother?



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.

Prayer

We acknowledge we are in the presence of God so let us say:

Direct O Lord and guide and influence all that is happening in my mind and heart during this time of prayer: all my moods and feelings, my memories and imaginings; my hopes and desires; may all be directed and influenced to your greater glory, praise and service and to my growth in your Spirit.
Amen

Let the Spirit enter our hearts and enlighten our minds so that we can have the generosity we need to be able to forgive others and be a blessing to them.

Reading Matthew 18:21-35

Peter went up to Jesus and said, "Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?" Jesus answered, "Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.

"And so the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they

brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; but he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt. At this, the servant threw himself down at his master's feet' Give me time', he said, 'and I will pay the whole sum.' And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt.

Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him. 'Pay what you owe me he said. His fellow servant fell at his feet and implored him saying, 'Give me time and I will pay you.' But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt. His fellow servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened, and they went to the master and reported the whole affair to him. Then the master sent for him. 'You wicked servant,' he said. 'I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?' And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart."

Questions for Reflection

As you slowly read the passage allow this parable of Jesus regarding forgiveness to soak into your mind. The picture at the top of the page or holding a crucifix may help with that.

1. What is this passage saying to you?
2. What word(s), sentence or phrase most caught your attention; most touched your heart; most challenged you; most comforted you? Is there anything Jesus said that you found uncomfortable?
3. How often are you willing to forgive? Are you holding grudges with anyone? Have you shut them out of your life? Have you struggled to forgive?
4. How much do you owe God? Do you feel your debt is unpayable? Do you live feeling grateful towards God for the times he has forgiven you?
5. Thinking of the times that God has forgiven you, how has it made you feel? Do you extend that forgiveness towards others? Does it fill

your heart with generosity towards those who have wronged you?
Do you look at them with mercy, forgiveness and love?

End Prayer Suscipe of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.

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