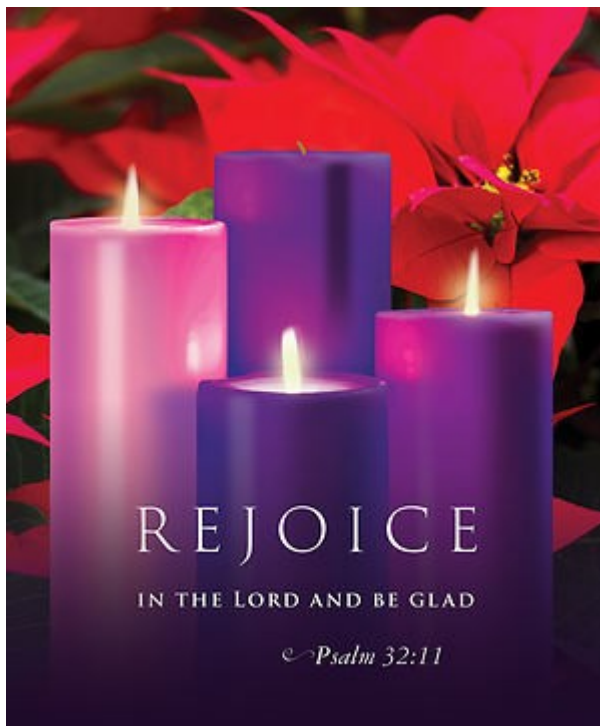


Lectio Divina – I Baptise with Water



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 us pray on this Gaudete Sunday, that God fills our hearts with hope and joy and takes away all that hinders us from feeling his loving presence.

Reading John 1:6-8, 19-28

A man came, sent by God. His name was John.
He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light.
This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ'. Well then, they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?'

He answered, 'No'. So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?'

So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied.

a voice that cries in the wilderness:

Make a straight way for the Lord'.

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you - unknown to you - the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap'. This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Questions for Reflection

As you slowly read this Gospel passage allow the words to soak into your mind. You may want to ponder the advent wreath at the top of the page or perhaps light your own Advent candle as you reflect on the passage. You may also want to reflect on the coming of Christ by praying the "O Antiphons at the end of this leaflet.

1. What is this passage saying to you?
2. What word(s), sentence or phrase in this Gospel passage most caught your attention; most touched your heart; most challenged you; most comforted you? Is there anything in this passage that you found uncomfortable?
3. John came as a witness as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. In this Season of Advent
 - o How have you been a witness for the light of God?
 - o How does what you say and do give witness to the coming of Christ?
 - o How is the way you bear witness an encouragement for others?
4. John was a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight way for the Lord. During this 3rd week of Advent, Gaudete Sunday,
 - o How can you prepare a way for the coming of Christ?
 - o In what ways can you share the Joy of the Gospel with those you encounter.
5. John said 'there stands among you -unknown to you - the one who is coming after me". During this Advent season,
 - o How can you recognise the face of Jesus in the people you encounter each day?

Let us now spend 10 minutes reading, repeating, responding and resting and then share what we thought, felt etc. only if you are comfortable to do so.

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

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!