

Lectio Divina – He remained there for Forty Days



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 make a journey of conversion during this time of Lent. Let us renew the promises of our Baptism: to renounce Satan and all his work in order to follow the path of God and arrive at Easter in the joy of the Spirit.

Reading Mark 1:12-15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels looked after him.

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. 'The time has come' he said 'and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.'

Questions for Reflection

As you slowly read this Gospel passage think of the Spirit driving Jesus out into the desert before he started his ministry. You may want to light a candle to help you ponder the passage or reflect on the words of Pope Francis below.

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. Jesus remained in the wilderness for forty days. As Lent begins, what is the purpose of these forty days for you? Will you, like Jesus, use this time to be silent and listen to the word of God.?
4. In the midst of the desert, is your faith attacked by wild beasts? What are the things that threaten your faith? Do you turn to your angels for help. Who are the angels in your life who have assisted you when under attack?
5. What about temptations when you are most vulnerable? How do you deal with them? Do you ask for God's help?
6. Jesus went to Galilee and proclaimed the good news. Where and with whom are you being called to share the Gospel with this week?
7. Jesus calls us to repent and believe in the Gospel. Are there areas in your life that need conversion and how can you strengthen your faith in the Gospel?

Pope Francis tells us:

During the Season of Lent, the Holy Spirit drives us too, like Jesus, into the desert. It is not, as we have seen, a physical place, but rather an existential dimension in which we can be silent and listen to the word of God, "so that a true conversion might be effected in us" (Collect, First Sunday of Lent, B, translated from the Italian). Do not be afraid of the desert, seek out moments of more prayer, of silence, to enter into us. Do not be afraid. We are called to walk in God's footsteps, renewing our baptismal promises: renouncing Satan, and all his works and all his empty promises.

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
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