

Lectio Divina – The Son of Man must be lifted up



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

As you listen to Jesus telling Nicodemus about God and his love for us, allow the Spirit into your heart so that you can feel this love.

Reading John 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

The Son of Man must be lifted up
as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,
so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.
Yes, God loved the world so much
that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost
but may have eternal life.
For God sent his Son into the world
not to condemn the world,

but so that through him the world might be saved.
No one who believes in him will be condemned;
but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already, because he has
refused to believe
in the name of God's only Son.
On these grounds is sentence pronounced:
that though the light has come into the world
men have shown they prefer darkness to the light
because their deeds were evil.
And indeed, everybody who does wrong
hates the light and avoids it,
for fear his actions should be exposed;
but the man who lives by the truth
comes out into the light,
so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in

Questions for Reflection

As you slowly read this Gospel passage, allow the words of this Gospel Passage to soak into your mind. 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 tells Nicodemus that God loved the world so much. Have you ever struggled to believe in God's love? How do you show your love for others? How can you share God's love for you generously with those you encounter?
4. God sent Jesus into the world not to condemn us but to save us. Do you treat others with condemnation or with God's love? Do you judge yourself harshly?
5. God gave his only Son so that we may not be lost. How have your Lenten offerings helped you draw closer to God? How do you see your Lenten offerings as a "grateful response" of love towards God?
6. Those who live in truth come out into the light. In what ways can you be a child of light and truth in our troubled world, in your local community? How can you help co-create a better future with Christ?

Pope Francis tells us:

First of all, God so loved. Jesus' words to Nicodemus help us to see the true face of God. He has always looked at us with love, and for the sake of love, he came among us in the flesh of his Son. In Jesus, he went in search of us when we were lost. In Jesus, he came to raise us up when we fell. In Jesus, he wept with us and healed our wounds. In Jesus, he blessed our life forever. In Jesus, God spoke the definitive word about our life: you are not lost, you are loved. Loved forever.

We now come to the second aspect: God "gave" his Son. Precisely because he loves us so much, God gives himself; he offers us his life. Those who love always go out of themselves. Love always offers itself, gives itself, expends itself. That is the power of love: it shatters the shell of our selfishness, breaks out of our carefully constructed security zones, tears down walls and overcomes fears, so as to give freely of itself.

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