

Lectio Divina – My Lord and my God



The Incredulity of Thomas 16th Century

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 guide and enlighten our minds as we read the Gospel and reflect on what it means to have Jesus appear in our midst. Let the Spirit open the door to your heart so that you too can see the Risen Lord in your midst.

Reading John 20:19-31

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you', and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.'

After saying this he breathed on them and said:

'Receive the Holy Spirit.

For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven;
for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.'

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, 'We have seen the Lord', he

answered, 'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe'. Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.' Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!'

Jesus said to him:

'You believe because you can see me.

Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'

There were many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.

Questions for Reflection

As you slowly read this Gospel passage, allow its words to soak into your mind. You may want to light a candle to help you ponder the passage, reflect on the image above or 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. In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. How do you respond to the Risen Christ? Do you allow Him enter the closed door to your heart and offer His peace?
4. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord. How do you respond with joy to the Risen Christ? How can you share your joy with the people you encounter each day?
5. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit.' What do you feel Jesus is sending you to do? How do you respond? How will the Holy Spirit enable you to carry out your mission?
6. "We have seen the Lord." When have you seen God's activity in your life? How can you be more attentive to the presence of God in your every day living?

7. 'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe'. Are there times in your life when you, like Thomas, find it hard to believe? Have your doubts, like those of Thomas, intensified your faith making you proclaim "My Lord and my God?"

Pope Francis tells us:

In today's Gospel, we hear, over and over, the word "see". The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord (Jn 20:20). They tell Thomas: "We have seen the Lord" (v. 25). But the Gospel does not describe how they saw him; it does not describe the risen Jesus. It simply mentions one detail: "He showed them his hands and his side" (v. 20). It is as if the Gospel wants to tell us that that is how the disciples recognized Jesus: through his wounds. The same thing happened to Thomas. He too wanted to see "the mark of the nails in his hands" (v. 25), and after seeing, he believed (v. 27).

Despite his lack of faith, we should be grateful to Thomas, because he was not content to hear from others that Jesus was alive, or merely to see him in the flesh. He wanted to see inside, to touch with his hand the Lord's wounds, the signs of his love. The Gospel calls Thomas Didymus (v. 24), meaning the Twin, and in this he is truly our twin brother. Because for us too, it isn't enough to know that God exists. A God who is risen but remains distant does not fill our lives; an aloof God does not attract us, however just and holy he may be. No, we too need to "see God", to touch him with our hands and to know that he is risen, and risen for us.

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.