

Lectio Divina: Who do People say I am?



St Peter and St Paul – Monastery Icons

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:** Be like Mary and “ponder these things in your heart”. 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 with his disciples, let the Spirit enter you so that when Jesus asks you the question “Who do you say I am?” you can answer with the same conviction as Peter “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God”.

Reading Matthew 16:13-19

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ‘But you,’ he said ‘who do you say I am?’

Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said 'the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.' He then gave the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone.

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. "*Who do people say the Son of Man is*". Who do people in your community think Jesus is? What is their opinion of Jesus? Do their differences in opinion enrich or hinder your faith and that of your community?
4. "*But you,*" he said "*who do you say I am?*". Who is Jesus for you? How did you come to your opinion? What kind of mission does your opinion of Jesus imply for you?
5. "*You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church.?*". Who do you think you are for Jesus? In what ways can you be a small stone in your community? In what ways can you help to build the Kingdom of Heaven?

We shall now spend 10 minutes reflecting on this scripture passage by reading, repeating, responding and resting as described above. We will then share what we thought, felt etc. only if you are comfortable to do so.

Pope Francis tells us:

Jesus says to Simon: You, Simon, "you are Peter" — that is, stone, rock — "and on this rock I will build my Church" (v. 18).

With us too, today, Jesus wants to continue building his Church, this house with solid foundations but where cracks are not lacking, and which is in constant need of repair. Always. The Church always needs to be reformed, repaired. We certainly do not feel like rocks, but only like small stones. However, no small stone is useless; indeed, in Jesus' hands the smallest stone becomes precious, because he picks it up, gazes at it with great tenderness, fashions it with his Spirit, and positions it in the right place that he had always had in mind and where it can be more useful to the whole structure. Each of us is a small stone, but in Jesus' hands participates in the building of the Church. And all of us, as small as we are, are rendered "living stones" because when Jesus takes his stone in hand, he makes it his own; he infuses it with life, full of life, full of life from the Holy Spirit, full of life from his love. And thus we have a place and a mission in the Church: she is a community of life, made up of very many stones, all different, which form a single edifice as a sign of fraternity and communion.

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