

## Lectio Divina:      **And he took pity on them**

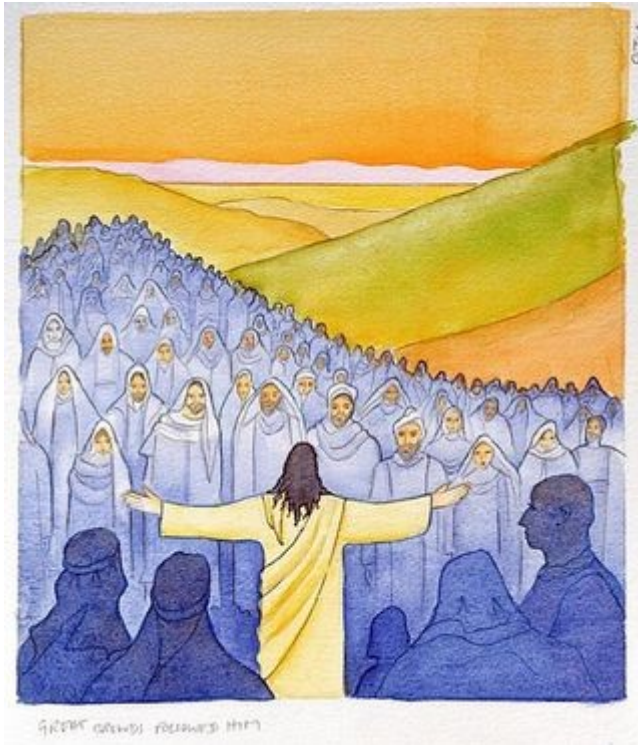


Image by Elizabeth Wang from the World Wide Web

### **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

Let the Spirit enter our hearts and minds so that we can rest in the company of Jesus. Let us pray that by resting we can be re-invigorated so that we are able continue on our mission.

## **Reading      Mark 6:30-34**

The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, 'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves.

But people saw them going, and many could guess where; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length.

### 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. *'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'*. Who takes pity on you when you have been busy? How do you recharge your batteries? Where do you go to pray? How much do you long for a deepening relationship with Jesus?
4. *'For there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat'*. Do you find yourself getting caught up in the business of life that you have no time for sustenance either physically and spiritually or both? How does that make you feel?
5. *Jesus took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd'* Do you aspire to be like Jesus putting the needs of others before your own? How do you discern between the importance of recharging your own batteries and responding to the needs of others? Does it cause conflict in your mind? Who do you turn to for help?

### Pope Francis tells us:

Today's Gospel passage tells us that after their first mission, the Apostles returned to Jesus and told him "all that they had done and taught". After the experience of the mission, which was undoubtedly thrilling but also arduous, they needed to rest. And understanding this well, Jesus wished to give them some relief and said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest for a while". But Jesus' intention could not be fulfilled this time because the crowd, guessing the location of the lonely place

where he would take the disciples by boat, ran there and got there ahead of them.

The same can happen today. At times we are not able to complete our projects because something urgent and unexpected occurs, disrupting our plans and [this] requires flexibility and being available to the needs of others.

In these situations, we are called to imitate what Jesus did: “As he landed he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things”. With this brief sentence, the Evangelist offers us a flash of singular intensity, taking a snapshot of the eyes of the divine Master and his teaching. Let us observe the three verbs in this frame: to see, to have compassion, to teach. We can call them the Shepherd’s verbs. The gaze of Jesus is not a neutral one — or worse, a cold and detached one because Jesus always looks with the eyes of the heart. And his heart is so tender and filled with compassion, that he is able to understand even the most hidden needs of people. Moreover, his compassion does not simply suggest an emotional response toward people in situations of distress. It is much more. It is God’s attitude and predisposition toward mankind and its history. Jesus appears as the fulfilment of God’s concern and care for his people.

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.

### **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.