

## **Lectio Divina: Jesus took the loaves and gave thanks**



Image 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 too can be touched by the generosity of Jesus in our poverty. Let us pray that, we, like Jesus are not overwhelmed by the many needs of people, but by his grace we are able to do what we can.

**Reading**      John 6:1-15

Jesus went off to the other side of the Sea of Galilee - or of Tiberias - and a large crowd followed him, impressed by the signs he gave by curing the sick. Jesus climbed the hillside, and sat down there with his disciples. It was shortly before the Jewish feast of Passover.

Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, 'Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?' He only said this to test Philip; he himself knew exactly what he was going to do. Philip answered,

'Two hundred denarii would only buy enough to give them a small piece each'. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, 'There is a small boy here with five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that between so many?' Jesus said to them, 'Make the people sit down'. There was plenty of grass there, and as many as five thousand men sat down. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and gave them out to all who were sitting ready; he then did the same with the fish, giving out as much as was wanted. When they had eaten enough he said to the disciples, 'Pick up the pieces left over, so that nothing gets wasted'. So they picked them up, and filled twelve hampers with scraps left over from the meal of five barley loaves.

The people, seeing this sign that he had given, said, 'This really is the prophet who is to come into the world'. Jesus, who could see they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, escaped back to the hills by himself.

### **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. 'Two hundred denarii would only buy enough to give them a small piece each'. How do you react to the problem of hunger in your community, in the wider society and in the world? Do you act like Phillip who complained that they didn't have enough money to feed everyone; like Andrew who complained there wasn't enough food to go round or like the boy with the loaves and fishes who was happy to share the little he had? What practical way can you help to ease the hunger in the world today?
4. '*There is a small boy here with five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that between so many?*' When have you been asked to share you time or talent? Have you ever thought of what effect your own small offerings given in love would have on the community?

5. *'Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and gave them out to all who were sitting ready'* For what do you need to give thanks to God today? Does your gratitude for your gifts, graces and blessings affect your practice of love and charity in your community?

### **Pope Francis tells us:**

The crowd is struck by the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves; but the gift Jesus offers is the fullness of life for a hungry mankind. Jesus satiates not only material hunger, but the most profound one, the hunger for the meaning of life, the hunger for God. Before the suffering, loneliness, poverty and difficulties of so many people, what can we ourselves do? Complaining doesn't resolve anything, but we can offer the little that we have, like the lad in the Gospel. We surely have a few hours of time, certain talents, some skills.... Who among us doesn't have "five loaves and two fish" of his own? We all have them! If we are willing to place them in the Lord's hands, they will be enough to bring about a little more love, peace, justice and especially joy in the world. How necessary joy is in the world! God is capable of multiplying our small acts of solidarity and allowing us to share in his gift.

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.