

Lectio Divina: I am the bread of life

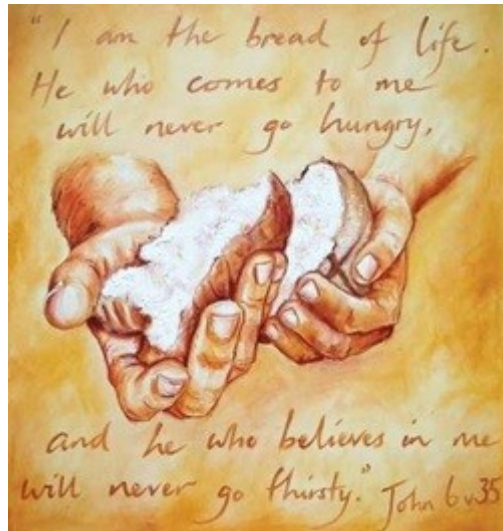


Image from the World Wide Web

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 become a close companion of Jesus, one who shares bread with him. Let us pray that through our companionship with Jesus, we will never hunger or thirst again.

Reading John 6:24-35

When the people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into boats and crossed to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they found him on the other side, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered:

"I tell you most solemnly, you are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you, for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal!"

Then they said to him, "What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?" Jesus gave them this answer, "This is working for God: you

must believe in the one he has sent." So they said, "What sign will you give to show us that we should believe in you? What work will you do? Our fathers had manna to eat in the desert; as scripture says: He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

Jesus answered:

"I tell you most solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

"Sir," they said "give us that bread always." Jesus answered:

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst."

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 are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat'*. Why do you look for Jesus? What do you hope to receive from him? What are you hungry for? How is your Spiritual hunger satisfied?
4. *'Do not work for food that cannot last'* What perishable goods occupy your time and efforts? How do you discern which foods will last?
5. *'Jesus answered: It is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread;'* What spiritual gifts has the Father given you? How do you show your gratitude for them? How do you share them with those in your community?
6. *'I am the bread of life'*. Where do you experience the Bread of Life? How do Jesus' words help you live the Eucharist better? In what ways does the Eucharist give you life?

Pope Francis tells us:

In a few moments, we will approach the table of the altar, to be fed by the Bread of Life. We do so in obedience to the Lord's command: "Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (Jn 6:35). All that the Lord asks of us is that we come. He invites us to set out, to be on the move, to go forth. He urges us to draw near to him and to become sharers in his life and mission. "Come", he says. For the Lord, that does not mean simply moving from one place to another. Instead, it means letting ourselves be moved and transformed by his word, in our choices, our feelings and our priorities, daring in this way to adopt his own way of acting and speaking. For his is "the language of bread that speaks of tenderness, companionship, generous dedication to others" (Corpus Christi Homily, Buenos Aires, 1995), the language of a love that is concrete and tangible, because it is daily and real.

In every Eucharist, the Lord breaks and shares himself. He invites us to break and share ourselves together with him, and to be part of that miraculous multiplication that desires to reach out and touch, with tenderness and compassion, every corner of this city, this country, and this land.

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.