

## **Lectio Divina: I have come down from heaven**



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 by believing Jesus is the bread of life, we will better understand the great gift Jesus has given us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist which we celebrate each time we gather for the Sacrifice of the Mass.

### **Reading      John 6:41-51.**

The Jews were complaining to each other about him, because he had said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven'. 'Surely this is Jesus son of Joseph' they said. 'We know his father and mother. How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?' Jesus said in reply, 'Stop complaining to each other.

'No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God, and to hear the teaching of the Father, and learn from it, is to come to me. Not that anybody has seen the Father, except the one who comes from God: he has seen the Father. I tell you most solemnly, everybody who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of

life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a man may eat it and not die.

I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.'

## 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. *'The Jews were complaining to each other about Jesus'*. When do you complain about the teachings of Jesus? Do you find his teachings challenging and difficult to accept in the world today?
4. *'It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God, and to hear the teaching of the Father, and learn from it, is to come to me'*. To what and where is God drawing you? Who teaches and inspires your faith? From what sources do you seek out and discern authentic teaching? How is your faith nurtured and sustained?
5. *'And the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world'*. Where do you experience the bread of life most strongly? In what ways does the Eucharist nourish you and the community in which you live particularly when you feel you are struggling, challenged or hopeless?

## Pope Francis tells us:

What does bread of life mean? We need bread to live. Those who are hungry do not ask for refined and expensive food, they ask for bread. Those who are unemployed do not ask for enormous wages, but the "bread" of employment. Jesus reveals himself as bread, that is, the essential, what is necessary for everyday life; without Him it does not

work. Not one bread among many others, but the bread of life. In other words, without him, rather than living, we get by: because he alone nourishes the soul; he alone forgives us from that evil that we cannot overcome on our own; he alone makes us feel loved even if everyone else disappoints us; he alone gives us the strength to love and, he alone gives us the strength to forgive in difficulties; he alone gives that peace to the heart that it is searching for; he alone gives eternal life when life here on earth ends. He is the essential bread of life.

I am the bread of life, He says. Let us pause on this beautiful image of Jesus. He could have offered a rationale, a demonstration, but – we know – Jesus speaks in parables, and in this expression: “I am the bread of life”, he truly sums up his entire being and mission. This will be seen completely at the end, at the Last Supper. Jesus knows that the Father is asking him not only to give food to people, but to give himself, to break himself, his own life, his own flesh, his own heart so that we might have life. These words of the Lord reawaken in us our amazement for the gift of the Eucharist. No one in this world, as much they might love another person, can make themselves become food for them. God did so, and does so, for us. Let us renew this amazement. Let us do so as we adore the Bread of Life, because adoration fills life with amazement.

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.