

## Lectio Divina: It is the Spirit that gives life

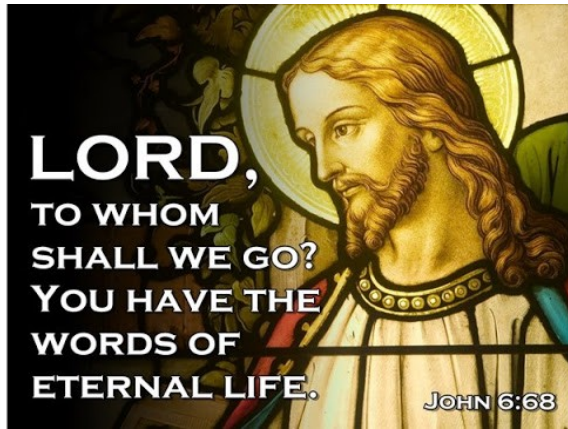


image from the World Wide Web

### 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 enlighten our minds so that we can see that Jesus is leading us away from the dependence of earthly bread and understand that he has the message of eternal life.

### **Reading      John 6:60-69**

After hearing it, many of his followers said, 'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?' Jesus was aware that his followers were complaining about it and said, 'Does this upset you? What if you should see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before?

'It is the spirit that gives life,  
the flesh has nothing to offer.

The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

'But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the outset those who did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. He went on, 'This is why I told you that no one could come to me unless the Father allows him'. After this, many of his disciples left him and stopped going with him.

Then Jesus said to the Twelve, 'What about you, do you want to go away too?' Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are the Holy One of God.'

## 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. *'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?'* What teachings of Christ do you find difficult to accept? What teachings of the Church do you struggle to accept?
4. *'The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life'*. What words or works of Jesus do you find life-giving? What works or words of Jesus strengthen your faith? How do you strengthen your faith amidst the crises and uncertainties of life?
5. *'After this, many of his disciples left him and stopped going with him'*. When has your faith been tested? Have you ever been tempted to walk away from your belief in God? What stopped you? Do you know someone who has walked away? How do you feel?
6. *'Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are the Holy One of God.'* Do wonder where you would go to if you left? Has there been an incident in your life that has convinced you that Jesus has the message of eternal life? What or who has helped you believe that Jesus is the Holy one of God? How do you convince others that Jesus is the Holy one of God?

## Pope Francis tells us:

Today the Sixth Chapter of the Gospel of John concludes the discourse on the Bread of Life, which Jesus gave the day after the multiplication of the loaves and fish.

Faced with this prodigious deed of Jesus, who with five loaves and two fish fed thousands of people, everyone acclaimed Him and wanted to lift Him up in triumph, to make Him king. But when He Himself explained that the gesture was a sign of His sacrifice, that is, of the gift of His life, His flesh and blood, and that those who want to follow Him must resemble

Him, His humanity given for God and for others, then no, this Jesus no longer was no longer liked, this Jesus throws us into crisis. Rather, we should be worried if He does not throw us into crisis, because we might have watered down His message! And let us ask for the grace to let ourselves be provoked and converted by His “words of eternal life”. And may Mary Most Holy, who bore her Son Jesus in the flesh and joined herself to His sacrifice, help us to always bear witness to our faith in our real lives.

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.