

Lectio Divina: Be Opened

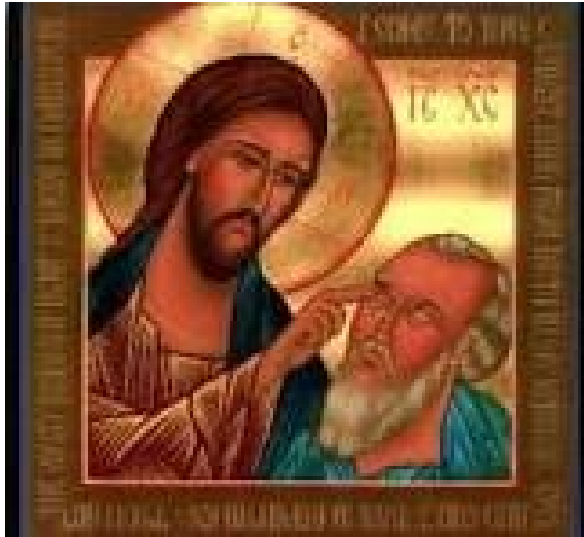


Image from the World Wide Web

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 our ears be open to the word of God and the fullness of Jesus’ message and our tongues be loosened to proclaim openly his Good News.

Reading Mark 7:31-37

Returning from the district of Tyre, he went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, right through the Decapolis region. And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle. Then looking up to heaven he sighed; and he said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened'. And his ears were opened, and the ligament of his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly. And Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, the more widely they published it. Their admiration was unbounded. 'He has done all things well,' they said 'he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.'

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. *'They brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech'*. When can you be deaf to the word of God? Do you sometimes feel tongue-tied when you try to proclaim the Good News to others? What hinders you from bringing God's love to those you encounter?
4. *'He took him aside in private, away from the crowd'*. Where do you go to be alone with Jesus? How can you make time to pray and be alone with God in the business of your day? How does being in quiet solitude make you feel?
5. *'Jesus said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened'*. How can you be more open to what really matters in life e.g. people of other races, cultures or religions; care of creation; the cry of those who are suffering?
6. *'Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, the more widely they published it.'* To whom have you shared your faith with this week? In what ways can you be a vessel of Good News for those you encounter.

Pope Francis tells us:

Jesus revealed to us the secret of a miracle that we too can imitate, becoming protagonists of "Ephphatha", of that phrase 'be opened' with which He gave speech and hearing back to the deaf and dumb man. It means opening ourselves to the needs of our brothers and sisters who are suffering and in need of help, by shunning selfishness and hard-heartedness. It is precisely the heart, that is the deep core of the person, that Jesus came to "open", to free, in order to make us capable of fully living the relationship with God and with others. He became man so that man, rendered internally deaf and mute by sin, may hear the voice of God,

the voice of Love that speaks to his heart, and thereby in turn, may learn to speak the language of love, transforming it into gestures of generosity and self-giving.

May Mary, the One who completely “opened” herself to the Lord’s love, enable us to experience each day, in faith, the miracle of “Ephphatha”, in order to live in communion with God and with our brothers and sisters.

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.