

Lectio Divina: He was not one of us



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 to help us see that the Spirit of Jesus is free to empower those outside our faith community and that we are not in an exclusive group because of our beliefs.

Reading Mark 9:38-43.45.47-48

John said to him, 'Master, we saw a man who is not one of us casting out devils in your name; and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him'. But Jesus said, 'You must not stop him: no one who works a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us.

'If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink just because you belong to Christ, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward.'
'But anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone round his neck. And if your hand should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for

you to enter into life crippled, than to have two hands and go to hell, into the fire that cannot be put out. And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye should cause you to sin, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell where their worm does not die nor their fire go out”.

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. *‘Master, we saw a man who is not one of us casting out devils in your name; and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him’* How do you define “one of us”? Have you ever excluded or tried to stop someone doing a good deed because they belong to another nation or creed or group? How can you be more open to seeing God work through those who are different to us?
4. *“Anyone who is not against us is for us.”* How do you define “for us” and “against us” when you take into consideration the variety of Christian beliefs? How do you engage with those of different beliefs? Do you categorise them as “for” or “against” Jesus?
5. *‘If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink just because you belong to Christ, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward.’* How can you help those who are in need in your community? In what small ways can you show kindness, generosity and inclusivity to those you encounter each day?
6. *‘If your hand should cause you to sin, cut it off;’* What behaviours, actions, habits do you need to remove from your life in order for you to get closer to God?

Pope Francis tells us:

God's great freedom in giving Himself to us is a challenge and an exhortation to change our attitudes and our relationships. It's the invitation that Jesus addresses to us today. He calls us not to think according to the categories of "friend/enemy," "we/them." Who is inside? Who is outside," "mine/yours," but to go beyond, to open our heart to be able to recognize God's presence and action also in unusual and unforeseen realms, and in persons that are not part of our circle. It's about being more attentive to the genuineness of the good, of the beautiful and of the true that is done, not about the name and provenance of the one who does it. And — as the remaining part of today's Gospel suggests — instead of judging others, we must examine ourselves, and "cut" without compromises all that can scandalize the persons weakest in the faith.

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.