

## Lectio Divina: Let the little children come



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 hear. 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 feel God's faithful love for us, a love that can help us endure the challenges we are faced within our own fragile relationships.

### **Reading      Mark 10:2 - 16**

Some Pharisees approached him and asked, 'Is it against the law for a man to divorce his wife?' They were testing him. He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' 'Moses allowed us' they said 'to draw up a writ of dismissal and so to divorce.

Then Jesus said to them, 'It was because you were so unteachable that he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. This is why a man must leave father and mother, and the two become one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide.' Back in the house the disciples questioned him again about this, and he said to them, 'The man who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too.'

People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' Then he put his arms round them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.

### **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. *"It was because you were so unteachable that he wrote this commandment for you"*? Have you ever closed your heart to the love of God? How can you be more open to the teachings of Jesus?
4. *"So then, what God has united, man must not divide"* When have you caused division in your community? When have you found that bonds have been strengthened when with humility you were prepared to work together through difficulties?
5. *'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them'*. Who are the "little ones" in your community who are excluded? When have you been an obstacle to someone following Jesus? How can you support people in their search for God?
6. *'Anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'* Have you ever learnt anything regarding the Kingdom of God from children? How can you be more childlike and trusting in your response to God's love?

### **Pope Francis tells us:**

In the Gospel of today's Liturgy we see Jesus react somewhat unusually: He is indignant. And what is most surprising is that his indignation is not

caused by the Pharisees who put him to the test with questions about the legality of divorce, but by his disciples who, to protect him from the crowd of people, rebuke some children who had been brought to Jesus. In other words, the Lord is not angry with those who argue with him, but with those who, in order to relieve him of his burden, make the children go away from him. Why? It is a good question: why does the Lord do this?

Let us remember – it was the Gospel reading two Sundays ago – that Jesus, performing the gesture of embracing a child, identified himself with the little ones: he taught that it is indeed the little ones, namely, those are dependent on others, who are in need and cannot reciprocate, who must be served first (see Mk 9:35-37). Those who seek God find him there, in the little ones, in those in need: in need not only of material goods, but of care and comfort, such as the sick, the humiliated, prisoners, immigrants, the incarcerated. He is there: in the little ones. This is why Jesus gets angry: any affront to a little one, a poor person, a child, a defenceless person, is done to Him.

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.