

Lectio Divina:

Which is the first of all the commandments?

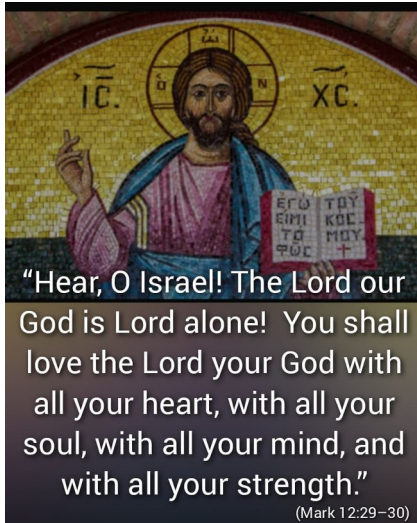


Image from the World Wide Web

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 contemplate the importance of love in our lives; the love of God and the love of our neighbour. Let us pray for a truly loving heart.

Reading Mark 12:28-34

One of the scribes who had listened to them debating and had observed how well Jesus had answered them, now came up and put a question to him, 'Which is the first of all the commandments?' Jesus replied, 'This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.

There is no commandment greater than these.' The second is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. The scribe said to him, 'Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true: that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice.' Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken,

said, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God'. And after that no one dared to question him any more

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. *'Which is the first of all the commandments?'* What is the most important priority for you in practising your faith? What in your opinion is the first of all the commandments?
4. *"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength."* How can you love God completely? How can you make God a priority in your life? How will loving God with all your heart soul and mind change your lifestyle?
5. *'You must love your neighbour as yourself.'* How do you love your neighbour as yourself? Who do you regard as your neighbour? In what way can you show love to your neighbour this week?
6. *'Jesus saw how wisely he had spoken'*. What resources do you turn to to help you grow in faith and understanding? How do you discern between the importance of observing religious practices and obeying these two commandments?

Pope Francis tells us:

Mark the Evangelist does not bother to specify who the neighbour is, because a neighbour is a person whom I meet on the journey, in my days. It is not a matter of pre-selecting my neighbour: this is not Christian. I think my neighbour is the one I have chosen ahead of time: no, this is not Christian, it is pagan; but it is about having eyes to see and a heart to want what is good for him or her. If we practice seeing with Jesus' gaze, we will always be listening and be close to those in need. Of course our neighbour's needs require effective responses, but even beforehand they require sharing. With one look we can say that the hungry need not just a

bowl of soup, but also a smile, to be listened to and also a prayer, perhaps said together. Today's Gospel passage invites us all to be projected not only toward the needs of our poorest brothers and sisters, but above all to be attentive to their need for fraternal closeness, for a meaning to life, and for tenderness. This challenges our Christian communities: it means avoiding the risk of being communities that have many initiatives but few relationships; the risk of being community 'service stations' but with little company, in the full and Christian sense of this term.

God, who is love, created us to love and so that we can love others while remaining united with him. It would be misleading to claim to love our neighbour without loving God; and it would also be deceptive to claim to love God without loving our neighbour. The two dimensions of love, for God and for neighbour, in their unity characterize the disciple of Christ.

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.