

Lectio Divina: Are You the King of the Jews?



Christ before Pilate - Pietro Lorenzetti ca. 1280 – 1348

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 may discern which are the voices that speak the truth to us.

Reading John:18:33-37

'Are you the king of the Jews?' Pilate asked. Jesus replied, 'Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others spoken to you about me?' Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew? It is your own people and the chief priests who have handed you over to me: what have you done?' Jesus replied, 'Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this kind.' 'So you are a king then?' said Pilate. 'It is you who say it' answered Jesus. 'Yes, I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice

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. *'Mine is not a kingdom of this world'*. What does it mean for you that the Kingdom of Jesus is not of this world? What kind of Kingdom are you expecting? In what way does Christ reign in your life?
4. *'I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth.'* How do you testify to the truth of what you believe? When have you failed to speak out as you should? What have you done to share your faith this week?
5. *'All who are on the side of truth listen to my voice?'* What do you understand the Truth to be? When have you listened to the voice of God? What is the voice of God inviting you to do?

Pope Francis tells us:

"My kingship", he says to Pilate, "is not of this world" (Jn 18:36). He did not come to dominate but to serve. He did not come amid signs of power, but with the power of signs. He was not dressed with precious insignia, but he was naked on the cross. And it was precisely through the inscription placed on the cross that Jesus came to be defined as "king" (cf. Jn 19:19). His kingship is truly beyond human parameters! We could say that he is not like other kings, but he is a King for others. Let us reflect on this: in front of Pilate, Christ says he is a king at the moment in which the crowd is against Him; but when the crowd was following and acclaiming him, he remained distant from this acclamation. That is, Jesus is showing that he is sovereignly free from the desire of earthly fame and glory. And we – let us ask ourselves – do we know how to imitate him in this aspect? Do we know how to govern our tendency to be continuously sought after and approved, or do we do everything to be esteemed by others? So, I ask: what matters? Is it applause or service that matters? About what we do, particularly concerning our Christian commitment?

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.