

Lectio Divina: Heaven and Earth will pass away



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 in the knowledge that Jesus’ words will not pass away despite the passing away of heaven and earth.

Reading Mark 13:24-32.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'In those days, after that time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory; then too he will send the angels to gather his chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of heaven.

'Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. So with you when you see these things happening: know that he is near, at the very gates.

I tell you solemnly, before this generation has passed away all these things will have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

'But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father.

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. *"In those days, after that time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken".* Have you ever listened to those prophets of doom who predict by various means that the end is near or that God will take out his anger on the world because of our way of life? How do you respond to such predictions? How do you feel as you read Jesus' words?
4. *"Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near."* How does nature help you to become more aware of God's presence? How do your religious and moral values shape the way you use natural resources?
5. *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away"*? Does this bring you consolation and hope? Are there any words of Jesus that will never pass away for you? What are the words or passage from Scriptures that are particularly memorable for you? How have they brought you consolation?

Pope Francis tells us:

In the end Jesus says what does not fall: "Heaven and earth will pass away", He says, "but my words will not pass away" (v. 31). The Lord's words will not pass away. He makes a distinction between the penultimate things, which pass, and the ultimate things, that remain. It is a message for us, to guide us in our important decisions in life, to guide us on what it is worth investing our life. In something transitory, or in the words of the Lord, something that remains forever? Obviously on these. But it is not easy.

Indeed, the things that come before our senses and give us immediate satisfaction attract us, while the words of the Lord, although beautiful, go beyond the immediate and require patience. We are tempted to cling to what we see and touch and what seems safer to us. It is human, that is temptation. But this is a deception, because “heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away”.

And we, brothers and sisters, let us ask ourselves: what are we investing our lives in? On things that pass, such as money, success, appearance, physical well-being? We will take away none of these things. Are we attached to earthly things, as if we will live here forever? When we are young and healthy, everything is fine, but when the time comes to depart, we have to leave everything behind.

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.