

Lectio Divina:

Blessed are you among women



The Visitation – Sieger Koder

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 our minds to give us the courage to “rejoice in the Lord always” and to share that joy with those we encounter.

Reading Luke 1:39-45

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.’

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 Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah.'* Have you ever felt the impulse to go in haste to share unexpected news with someone? How can you bring Jesus' presence to others this Advent?
4. *'And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit'* When have you rejoiced in the presence of those who have lifted your spirits and been a friend to you? When have you been inspired to proclaim the coming of Jesus into the world this Advent?
5. *'And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?'* Have you ever been surprised by an encounter with the Lord? In these final few days of Advent, how can you become more attentive to opportunities for these encounters?

Pope Francis tells us:

The Gospel of the Liturgy of today, fourth Sunday of Advent, tells of Mary's visit to Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1: 39-45). After receiving the annunciation of the angel, the Virgin does not stay at home, thinking over what has happened and considering the problems and pitfalls, which were certainly not lacking: because, poor girl, she did not know what to do with this news, with the culture of that age... She did not understand... On the contrary, she first thinks of someone in need; instead of being absorbed in her own problems, she thinks about someone in need, she thinks about Elizabeth, her relative, who was of advanced years and with child, something strange and miraculous. Mary sets out on with generosity, without letting herself be put off by the discomforts of the journey, responding to an inner impulse that called her to be close and to help. A long road, kilometre after kilometre, and there was no bus to go there: she went on foot. She went

out to help. How? By sharing her joy. Mary gives Elizabeth the joy of Jesus, the joy she carried in her heart and in her womb. She goes to her and proclaims her feelings, and this proclamation of feelings then became a prayer, the Magnificat, which we all know. And the text says that Our Lady “arose and went with haste” (v. 39).

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.