

Lectio Divina: Prepare the way of the Lord



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 we shall soon see the salvation of God in the birth of Jesus Christ.

Reading Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign Tiberius Caesar's, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, when Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas. the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.

And he went into all the region around the Jordan proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet :

The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled,

and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall become straight,
and the rough places shall become level ways.
And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

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. *'The word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.'* Where do you hear the word of God? In what type of landscape do you most feel God's presence? During this Advent, how can you become more attentive to the Word of God in the environment around you?
4. *'The voice of one crying in the wilderness.'* Do you think that this Advent, you may be called to be that "voice in the wilderness" bringing hope and peace to those in need? In what ways do you think you can do this? How can you share the Joy of the Gospel with those you encounter?
5. *'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight'*? What preparations do you need to make during this season of Advent for the coming of Jesus and for the year ahead? How can you help prepare a way to meet Jesus for yourself and those you encounter?

Pope Francis tells us:

To prepare the way of the Lord's coming, it is necessary to take note of the requirements of conversion to which the Baptist invites us. What are these requirements for conversion? First of all we are called to fill the 'valleys' caused by coldness and indifference, opening ourselves to others with the same sentiments as Jesus, that is, with affection and fraternal attention which takes on the needs of our neighbours. To fill the valleys caused by coldness. One cannot have a relationship of love, charity and fraternity

with one's neighbours if there are 'gaps' just as one cannot travel a road with many potholes. This requires a change of attitude. And all this should also be done with special attention to the neediest. Then there is the need to curtail the indifference caused by pride and arrogance. How many people, perhaps without realizing it, are proud, are indifferent, lack that kindly relationship. It is necessary to overcome this by making concrete gestures of reconciliation with our brothers and sisters, asking for forgiveness for our faults. It is not easy to reconcile with another. One always thinks: "who will take the first step?". The Lord helps us in this if we are of good will. Indeed, conversion is complete if it leads us to humbly recognize our errors, our infidelity and failings.

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.