

## Lectio Divina: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me



The Jubilee icon painted by Mulugeta Araya from Ethiopia.

### 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 enable us to continue the mission of Jesus by bringing the good news to the poor, healing the sick and bringing freedom to captives.

### **Reading      Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21**

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

At that time: Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to

read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll, and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

And he rolled up the scroll, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

### 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. *'Many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us.'* Who are the people who have influenced your understanding of your faith? What sources help you get to know Jesus and his teachings better? Do you share your faith story with others?
4. *'And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day'* What customs of the Sabbath do you observe? How has your faith customs developed since your childhood?
5. *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor?"* What have you been anointed to do? What special gifts of the Spirit do you have? How can you use these gifts to best serve those in your community?
6. *'He has sent me to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'* How can you fulfil the year of God's favour in this Jubilee year? In what ways can you be a Pilgrim of Hope to those you encounter each day?

7. *'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'* What piece of Scripture do you recognise being fulfilled today.

**Pope Francis tells us:**

"Today" – says Jesus – "this scripture has been fulfilled" (Lk 4:21). The Word wishes to take flesh today, in the times in which we are living, not in some ideal future. A French mystic of the last century, who chose to experience the Gospel in the peripheries, wrote that the word of God is not "a 'dead letter'; it is spirit and life... The listening that the word of the Lord demands of us is our 'today': the circumstances of our daily life and the needs of our neighbour" (Madeleine Delbrêl, *La joie de croire*, Paris, 1968). Let us ask, then: do we want to imitate Jesus, to become ministers of liberation and consolation for others, putting the word into action? Are we a Church that is docile to the word? A Church inclined to listen to others, engaged in reaching out to raise up our brothers and sisters from all that oppresses them, to undo the knots of fear, to liberate those most vulnerable from the prisons of poverty, from interior ennui and the sadness that stifles life? Isn't that what we want?

**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.