

Lectio Divina: Blessed are you



Detail of Sermon on the Mountain by Károly Ferenczy (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

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 reflect on the qualities that are expected of us if we want to be a disciple of Christ.

Reading Luke 6:17, 20-26

At that time: Jesus came down with the Twelve and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:

'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and spurn your name as evil on account of the Son of Man!

Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.'

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. You may even want to imagine you are on the level ground listening to Jesus inviting us to be blessed.

1. What is this passage saying to you?
2. As you ponder the Beatitudes, how do they make you feel? Which of them most caught your attention; most touched your heart; most challenged you; most comforted you? Is there anything in this passage that you found uncomfortable? Do you feel 'blessed' joyful? From where, from whom, does this joy come?
3. *'Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied..'* What are you hungry for? What will satisfy your needs? Do you know anyone who is hungry? How can you be a Pilgrim of Hope and bring God's love to them?
4. *'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you.'* Do you know someone who is marginalised? What can you do to help them feel included? Have you ever felt excluded or hated? Did you feel the love of God perhaps through someone unexpected?
5. *'Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven;'* What brings you joy? What blessings can you give thanks to God for?
6. *'But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.'* How do you treat your possessions? What disordered attachments keep you from the freedom of being a disciple of Jesus?

Pope Francis tells us:

The page from today's Gospel invites us to reflect on the profound sense of having faith, which consists in our trusting completely in the Lord. It is about demolishing worldly idols in order to open our hearts to the true and living God. He alone can give our life that fullness so deeply desired and yet difficult to attain.

We are called to happiness, to be blessed, and we become so as of now, to the measure in which we place ourselves on the side of God, of his

Kingdom, on the side of what is not ephemeral but rather endures for eternal life. We are happy if we acknowledge we are needy before God — and this is very important: “Lord, I need you” — and if, like him and with him, we are close to the poor, the suffering and the hungry. We too are like this before God: we are poor, suffering, we are hungry before God. Although we possess worldly goods, we experience joy when we do not idolize or sell our souls out to them, but are able to share them with our brothers and sisters. Today the liturgy invites us once again to question ourselves about this and to be truthful in our heart.

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.