

Lectio Divina: Judge not and you will not be judged.

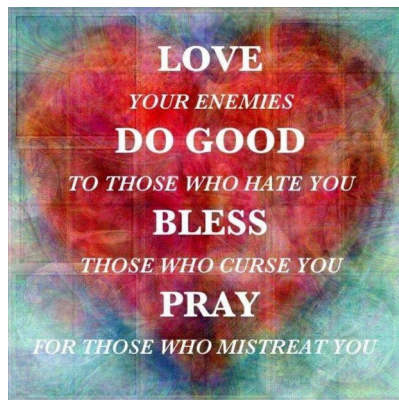


Image from the World Wide Web

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 guide our hearts and enlighten our minds as we reflect on the challenges of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus that is to look at life and people with the same viewpoint as Jesus and to be as literal as Jesus in love and mercy.

Reading Luke 6:27-38

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, 'I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you; and from one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

'If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

'Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed

down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.'

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 with Jesus listening to the challenges of how we should live if we want to be his disciple.

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 or startling? Do you find that these words of Jesus offer you freedom or do you find them a burden?
3. *'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you'*. Do you think you are ready to go that extra mile for someone you don't particularly like?
4. *'Give to everyone who begs from you; and from one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back.'* How can you become more generous? What stops from being more generous with your time, possessions and gifts?
5. *'Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.'* When have you experienced God's mercy? When have you shared God's mercy with others? Can you think of a time when someone was merciful to you?
6. *'Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven.'* Under what circumstances are you most judgemental? Are you prepared to look for the best in people and make allowances for their faults and failings with the hope that people look for the best in you and overlook your faults and failings?

Pope Francis tells us:

The passage of St Luke concludes with the invitation not to judge and to be merciful. However, it often seems that we have been appointed judges of others: gossiping, criticizing, we judge everyone. But Jesus tells us: "Judge not and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be

condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven". And so, we say it every day in the Our Father: forgive us as we forgive. In fact if I do not first forgive, how can I ask the Father to forgive me?

There is also another really beautiful image in the Gospel reading: "Give and it will be given to you". And here "Jesus' heart can be seen to grow and he makes this promise which is perhaps an image of heaven. The Christian life as Jesus presents it truly seems to be "folly". St Paul himself speaks of the folly the cross of Christ, which is not part of the wisdom of the world. For this reason to be a Christian is to become a bit foolish, in a certain sense. And to renounce that worldly shrewdness in order to do all that Jesus tells us to do. And, if we make an accounting, if we balance things out, it seems to weigh against us. But the path of Jesus is magnanimity, generosity, the giving of oneself without measure. He came into the world to save and he gave himself, he forgave, he spoke ill of no one, he did not judge.

Of course, being Christian isn't easy and we cannot become Christian with our own strength; we need "the grace of God". Therefore, there is a prayer which should be said every day: "Lord, grant me the grace to become a good Christian, because I cannot do it alone."

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.