

## Lectio Divina:

## A man had a fig tree



Parable of the barren fig tree  
Art Source: [interruptingthesilence.com](http://interruptingthesilence.com)

## 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 to the goodness and patience of God who strives to help us to blossom to our full potential.

## **Reading      Luke 13:1-9**

There were some present at that very time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, ‘Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.’

And he told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vine dresser, “Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?” And he answered him, “Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig round it and put

on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.” ’

## 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 that you are there with Jesus as he was told the bad news.

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?
3. *'There were some present at that very time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.'* What do you do with the news that you receive? Do you try to discern the truth or do you have the opinion of the majority and that what you read in social media? Do you tend to cast judgement?
4. *"Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way?"* How do you relate to the atrocities that happen in the world today? Where do you go to look for answers?
5. *"A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none."* Have you ever felt that your spiritual efforts have been fruitless? What fruits are you searching for?
6. *'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig round it and put on manure'*. What resources might help you to nourish your faith? What sustenance do you think you need to be able to blossom to your full extent? Who can help you do this?

## Pope Francis tells us:

The Gospel for this third Sunday of Lent speaks to us about God's mercy and of our conversion. Jesus recounts the parable of the barren fig tree. What does this parable symbolize? What do the characters in this parable symbolize?

The master represents God the Father and the vine dresser is the image of Jesus, while the fig tree is the symbol of an indifferent and insensitive humanity. Jesus intercedes with the Father in favour of humanity — and he always does so — and implores him to wait and to give it more time so that it may bring forth the fruits of love and justice. The fig tree that the master in the parable wants to uproot represents a sterile existence that is incapable of giving, incapable of doing good. It is the symbol of one who lives for himself, sated and calm, enjoying his own comforts, incapable of turning his gaze and his heart to those beside him who find themselves in conditions of suffering, poverty and hardship. This attitude of selfishness and spiritual barrenness, is compared to the vine dresser's great love for the fig tree. He asks the master to wait. He is patient, knows how to wait, and devotes his time and his work to it. He promises the master to take special care of that unfortunate tree.

And this vine dresser's likeness manifests the mercy of God who leaves us time for conversion. We all need to convert ourselves, to take a step forward; and God's patience and mercy accompanies us in this. Despite the barrenness that marks our lives at times, God is patient and offers us the possibility to change and make progress on the path towards good.

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.