

Lectio Divina: Jesus lifted up this eyes to heaven



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 to a deeper relationship with God and to enable us to have the freedom to make brave prayer requests like those Jesus made to his Father.

Reading John 17:20-26

At that time: Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and praying said, ‘Holy Father, I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.’

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 might want to imagine that you are in the upper room at the Last Supper listening to Jesus praying to the Father for you and reflect on the feeling that it stirs up in you. .

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. *'Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and praying said, 'Holy Father, I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you'.* Who do you need to pray for at the moment? Whose faith do you need to support through your words and actions?
4. *'The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one'.* What is your experience of unity in your church and with other Christians? Where is there disunity and discord in your community? What can you do to build bridges?
5. *'O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known'.* How can you get to know God better? What sources do you use to strengthen your relationship with God? How can you help make God known to those whom you encounter?
6. *'I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them'.* Have you ever been enveloped in the love of God? What did it feel like? Did it overflow to others?

Pope Francis tells us:

After the Last Supper, Jesus prayed "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). This was His prayer before the Passion, we could call it His spiritual testament. Let us note, however, that the Lord did not command that His disciples be united. No, He prayed. He prayed to the Father for us, so that we

might be one. This means that we are not able to achieve unity with our own strength. Above all, unity is a gift, it is a grace to be requested through prayer.

Each one of us needs it. In fact, we know that we are not capable of preserving unity even within ourselves. Even the apostle Paul felt a painful conflict within himself: wanting the good but inclined toward evil (see Rm 7:19). He had thus grasped the root of so many divisions that surround us – between people, in families, in society, between nations and even between believers – and inside us. The Second Vatican Council stated, “the imbalances under which the world labours are linked with that more basic imbalance which is rooted in the heart of man. For in man himself many elements wrestle with one another. [...] Hence he suffers from internal divisions, and from these flow so many and such great discords in society” (Gaudium et spes, 10). Therefore, the solution to these divisions is not to oppose someone, because discord generates more discord. The true remedy begins by asking God for peace, reconciliation, unity.

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.