

Lectio Divina: On this Rock I will build my Church



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

As you listen to Jesus with his disciples, let the Spirit enter you so that when Jesus asks you the question "Who do you say I am?" you can answer with the same conviction as Peter "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God".

Reading Matthew 16:13-19

At that time: When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'

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 Jesus asking you personally “But who do you say I am”?

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. ‘*Who do people say the Son of Man is*’. Who do people in your community think Jesus is? What is their opinion of Jesus? Do their differences in opinion enrich or hinder your faith?
4. ‘*But who do you say that I am?*’. Who is Jesus for you? How did you come to this belief?
5. ‘*For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.*’ Who are the people or what are the resources that brought you to faith in Jesus? How does God reveal himself to you?
6. ‘*You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church?*’ Who do you think you are for Jesus? In what ways can you be a small stone in your community? In what ways can you help to build the Kingdom of Heaven?

Pope Francis tells us:

“Brothers and sisters, what happened in a unique way in St Peter, also happens in every Christian who develops a sincere faith in Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Today’s Gospel passage also asks each of us, is your faith good? Each one answer in his or her heart. Is my faith good? How does the Lord find our hearts? A heart that is firm as a rock, or a heart like sand, that is doubtful, diffident, disbelieving? It will do us good to think about this throughout the day today. If the Lord finds in our heart, I don’t say a perfect, but sincere, genuine faith, then He also sees in us living stones with which to build his community. This community’s foundation stone is Christ, the unique cornerstone. On his side, Peter is the rock, the visible foundation of the Church’s unity; but every baptized person is called to offer Jesus his or her lowly but sincere faith, so that He may continue to build his Church, today, in every part of the world. are beside us.

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.