

Lectio Divina: Lord, Teach us to Pray



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 hear. 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 open our hearts and minds so that prayer be an integral part of our mission in life as it was for Jesus.

Reading Luke 11:1-13

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' And he said to them, 'When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'

And he said to them, 'Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within, "Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything"? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to

your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’

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 how it feels to have Jesus teaching you how to pray.

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 was praying in a certain place’*. Where is your place of prayer? How do you feel when you take time to go to your own place of prayer?
4. *‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’* Who taught you to pray? How do you pray? What forms of prayer do you find most intuitive? What does praying mean for you?
5. *‘Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.’* When have you felt the forgiveness of another? Have you in turn shown forgiveness? Do you find this challenging?
6. *I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.’* Are you persistent in praying for what you really want? Can you think of a time when you have persistently asked, sought and knocked and the door was opened to you? How did it make you feel?
7. *‘If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’* What gifts, graces and blessings has God bestowed on you? How do you share these God given gifts with others?

Pope Francis tells us:

“Lord, teach us to pray”; and He says in reply, “When you pray, say: ‘Father...’”. This word is the “secret” of Jesus’ prayer, it is the key that he himself gives to us so that we too might enter into that relationship of confidential dialogue with the Father who accompanied and sustained his whole life.

With the name “Father” Jesus combines two requests: “hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come”. Jesus’ prayer, and the Christian prayer therefore, first and foremost, makes room for God, allowing him to show his holiness in us and to advance his kingdom, beginning with the possibility of exercising his Lordship of love in our lives.

Three other supplications complete this prayer that Jesus taught, the “Our Father”. There are three questions that express our basic needs: bread, forgiveness and help in temptation. One cannot live without bread, one cannot live without forgiveness and one cannot live without God’s help in times of temptation. The bread that Jesus teaches us to ask for is what is necessary, not superfluous. It is the bread of pilgrims, the righteous, a bread that is neither accumulated nor wasted, and that does not weigh us down as we walk. Forgiveness is, above all, what we ourselves receive from God: only the awareness that we are sinners forgiven by God’s infinite mercy can enable us to carry out concrete gestures of fraternal reconciliation. The last supplication, “lead us not into temptation”, expresses the awareness of our condition, which is always exposed to the snares of evil and corruption. We all know what temptation is!

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.