

Lectio Divina: Martha was distracted



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 to welcome Jesus and to realise our responsibility of helping others to encounter Christ through our hospitality and generosity.

Reading Luke 10:38-42

At that time: Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.'

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 as a guest in your home and to imagine how you would welcome him. Would you serve him or listen to him?

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 entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house'*. When have you welcomed Jesus into your heart? How can you be more welcoming to others into your home which will mean welcoming Jesus?
4. *'But Martha was distracted with much serving.'* When have you been distracted with your own preoccupations that you have failed to notice someone in need of your help? When have you felt that you are doing all the work whilst others appear to be relaxing? Do you have the right balance between keeping on top of tasks and being truly present to the Lord's love?
5. *Tell her then to help me.'* When have you found it difficult to ask for help? Do you know someone who needs your help this week?
6. *'Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,'* Are you anxious and troubled about something this week? Does your faith in God help you in your anxiety?

Pope Francis tells us:

The passage today is that on Martha and Mary. St Luke describes them in this way: Mary, at the feet of Jesus, "listened to his teaching", while Martha was burdened with much serving (cf. Lk 10:39-40). Both welcome the Lord on his brief visit, but they do so differently. Mary sets herself at the feet of Jesus to listen but Martha lets herself become absorbed in preparing everything, and so much so that she says to Jesus: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me" (v. 40). And Jesus answers scolding her sweetly: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing" (v. 41).

What is this one thing that we need? First of all, it is important to understand that this is not about two contradictory attitudes: listening to the word of the Lord and practical service to our neighbour. These are not two attitudes opposed to one another, but, on the contrary, they are two essential aspects in our Christian life; aspects that can never be separated, but are lived out in profound unity and harmony. Martha considered only what she was doing to be essential; she was too absorbed and worried by the things "to do". For a Christian, works of service and charity are never detached from the principle

of all our action: that is, listening to the Word of the Lord, to be — like Mary — at the feet of Jesus, with the attitude of a disciple.

In our Christian life too, dear brothers and sisters, may prayer and action always be deeply united. A prayer that does not lead you to practical action for your brother — the poor, the sick, those in need of help, a brother in difficulty — is a sterile and incomplete prayer. But, in the same way, when ecclesial service is attentive only to doing, things gain in importance, functions, structures, and we forget the centrality of Christ. When time is not set aside for dialogue with him in prayer, we risk serving ourselves and not God present in our needy brother and sister. It is from contemplation, from a strong friendship with the Lord that the capacity is born in us to live and to bring the love of God, his mercy, his tenderness, to others. And also our work with brothers in need, our charitable works of mercy, lead us to the Lord, because it is in the needy brother and sister that we see the Lord himself.

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.