

Lectio Divina:

I came to cast fire on the earth



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 open our hearts to be able to spread the fire of God's love to those in need of peace in their lives.

Reading Luke 12:49-53

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, 'I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!

Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on in one house there will be five divided: three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'

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 one of the disciples listening to Jesus' challenging words about fire and division.

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. *'I have come to cast the earth on fire.'* How do you envisage the fire in this Scripture passage – as an image of destruction or as the Spirit of God's love? Do you ever feel the fire of God's love burning within you? What part do you play in helping to spread some of that fire of God's love everywhere?
4. *'I have a baptism to be baptised with'.* What do you understand by your baptismal call? How can you carry out your baptismal call more fully?
5. *'Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.'* When has your faith caused division either within your own heart or with others in your life? How can your faith be a unifying force rather than a divisive one?
6. *'They will be divided, father against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'* Have you ever caused division in your family because you have remained true to your convictions and your integrity? Have you ever compromised your convictions for the sake of keeping the peace?

Pope Francis tells us:

"The Gospel for this Sunday (Lk 12:49-53) is part of Jesus' teachings to the disciples during his journey to Jerusalem, where death on the cross awaits him. To explain the purpose of his mission, he takes three images: fire, baptism and division. Today I wish to talk about the first image: fire.

Jesus expresses it with these words: "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!" (v. 49). The fire that Jesus speaks of is the fire of the Holy Spirit, the presence living and working in us from the day of our Baptism. It — the fire — is a creative force that purifies and renews, that burns all human misery, all selfishness, all sin, which transforms us from within, regenerates us and makes us able to love. Jesus wants the Holy Spirit to blaze like fire in our heart, for it is only from the heart that the fire of divine love can spread and advance the Kingdom of God. It does not come from the head, it comes from the heart. This is why Jesus wants fire to enter our heart. If we open ourselves completely to the action of this fire which is the Holy Spirit, He will give us the boldness and the fervor to proclaim to everyone Jesus and his consoling message of mercy and salvation, navigating on the open sea, without fear.

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.