

## **Lectio Divina: For God so loved the world**

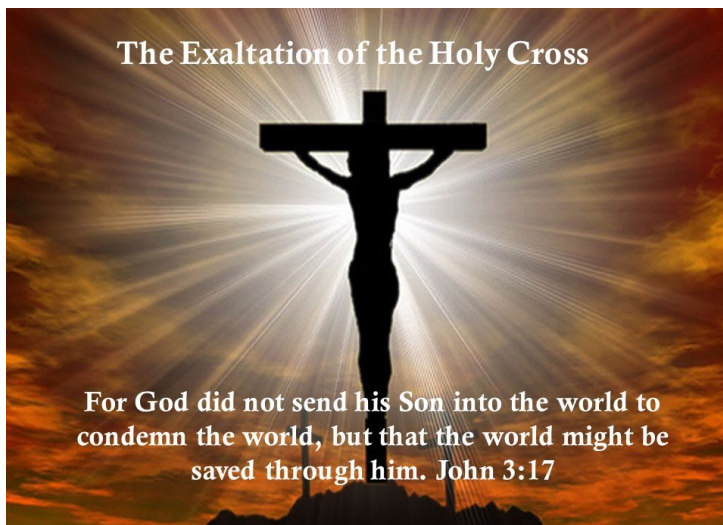


Image from the World Wide Web

### **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 telling Nicodemus about God and his love for us, allow the Spirit into your heart so that you can feel this love.

## **Reading      John 3:13-17**

At that time: Jesus said to Nicodemus,  
'No one has ascended into heaven  
except he who descended from heaven,  
the Son of Man.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,  
so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,  
that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.  
For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,  
but in order that the world might be saved through 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 that you are in the crowd listening to Jesus and wondering if you have what it takes to be his disciple.

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. *'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life'* In what ways do you lift up your faith in Jesus through your words and deeds? When have you shared your faith with someone over the past week?
4. *'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.'* Have you ever struggled to believe in God's unconditional love for you? How do you show your love for others? How can you share God's love for you generously with those you encounter?
5. *'For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.'* Do you treat others with condemnation or with God's love? Do you tend to judge yourself harshly? What can you do to make the environment that you live in a more just and peace-filled place? How can you be a source of unity rather than division?

### **Pope Francis tells us:**

First of all, God so loved. Jesus' words to Nicodemus help us to see the true face of God. He has always looked at us with love, and for the sake of love, he came among us in the flesh of his Son. In Jesus, he went in search of us when we were lost. In Jesus, he came to raise us up when we fell. In Jesus, he wept with us and healed our wounds. In Jesus, he blessed our life forever. In Jesus, God spoke the definitive word about our life: you are not lost, you are loved. Loved forever.

We now come to the second aspect: God "gave" his Son. Precisely because he loves us so much, God gives himself; he offers us his life. Those who love always go out of themselves. Love always offers itself, gives itself, expends itself. That is the power of love: it shatters the shell of our selfishness, breaks out of our carefully constructed security zones, tears down walls and overcomes fears, so as to give freely of itself.

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.