

Lectio Divina:

Take up your cross and follow me



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 enter our hearts and enlighten our minds to the difficult path we must follow in order to be a disciple of Jesus.

Reading Luke 14:25-33

At that time: Great crowds accompanied Jesus, and he turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.'

For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.'

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. *‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.’* What ties do you need to separate yourself from to become a disciple of Jesus? Do you give yourself to Jesus’ mission completely and unconditionally?
4. *‘Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.’* What crosses are you bearing at the moment? What crosses do you have to bear to grow as a missionary disciple?
5. *‘For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?’* What projects have you started and failed to complete? Have you ever experienced ridicule because of your faith beliefs?
6. *‘Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.’* What disordered attachments prevent you from being totally committed to Jesus’ mission? How can you grow in generosity and develop a healthy relationship with your possessions?

Pope Francis tells us:

To love even at the cost of sacrifice, silence, misunderstanding, solitude, resistance and persecution. To love in this way, even at this price, because, as Blessed John Paul I also said, if you want to kiss Jesus crucified, “you cannot help bending over the cross and letting yourself be pricked by a few thorns of the crown on the Lord’s head” (General Audience, 27 September 1978). A love that perseveres to the end, thorns and all: no leaving things half done, no cutting corners, no fleeing difficulties. If we fail to aim high, if we refuse to take risks, if we content ourselves with a watered-down faith, we are, as Jesus says, like those who want to build a tower but do not estimate the cost; they “lay the foundations”, but then are “not able to finish the work” (v. 29). If the fear of losing ourselves makes us stop giving ourselves, we leave things undone: our relationships and work, our responsibilities and commitments, our dreams and even our faith. And then we end up living life halfway – and how many people live life halfway, and we also frequently are

tempted to live life halfway – without ever taking the decisive step – this is what it means to live life halfway – without ever taking flight, without ever taking risks for the good, and without ever truly committing ourselves to helping others. Jesus asks us precisely this: live the Gospel and you will live your life, not halfway but to the full. Live the Gospel, live life, with no compromises.

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.