

Lectio Divina: There was a rich man who was clothed in purple



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 so that we can open our eyes to the needy around us and our ears to their cry for help.

Reading Luke 16:19 - 31

At that time: Jesus said to the Pharisees, 'There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame." But Abraham said, "Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not do so, and none may cross from there to us." And he said, "Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house — for I have five brothers — so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment." But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them." And he said, "No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." He said to him, "If

they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'

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 Pharisees listening to Jesus.

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. *'There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table.'* How does it make you feel that this parable represents the two extremes of society: the poor covered in sores with no rights and seemingly invisible; the rich self-centred in power and wealth? What can you do to bridge this gap? Have you ever been like the rich man when you have not noticed what is going on around you because you were too focussed on your own needs?
4. *'And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table.'* How do you treat the poor? Do they have a name? Who is the Lazarus in your community? How can I give more care and attention to him/her?
5. *'And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed,'* Have you ever felt separated from God? What caused this separation?
6. *'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'* Who can you rely on to teach you about your faith? How can you be more attentive to the Word of God?

Pope Francis tells us:

"We know the homeless man's name: his name was Lazarus. But what was the rich man's name? He doesn't have a name!". This is the most powerful curse for the person who trusts in himself or in the strength and human abilities rather than in God: he loses his name! Such a man, when asked his

name, responds not with his own proper name but by pointing to his possessions, his “property and villas”, or “to things, to idols”.

And so today we would do well to ask ourselves: Where do I place my trust? Have I placed it in the Lord or am I a pagan who trusts in things, in idols that I have fashioned? Do I still have a name, or have I begun to lose my name and to identify myself only as “I” with all its variations: “me, with me, for me, only me: always egoism, I!”. This way of living, will most certainly not bring us salvation.

And yet the Gospel offers “a door of hope to all those who have rooted themselves in a trust in man and in themselves, who have lost their name. In the end, there is always a way. The rich man himself bears witness to this. When he realizes that he has lost his name, that he has lost everything, he raises his eyes and speaks a single word: ‘Father!’. And God responds with one single word: ‘Son!’”. Thus, for those who have placed their trust in man, in themselves, and who have lost their name and dignity, there still remains the possibility of speaking this word, which is far greater than magic, far greater and more powerful: ‘Father!’”. We know that he is always waiting for us, waiting to open a door that we do not see, and he will say to us: ‘My child!’.

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.