

Lectio Divina: Increase our Faith



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 truth that serving others is a privilege and we should seek no reward.

Reading Luke 17:5-10

At that time: The Apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!' And the Lord said, 'If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea", and it would obey you.

'Will any one of you who has a servant ploughing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, "Come at once and recline at table"? Will he not rather say to him, "Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterwards you will eat and drink"? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty."

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 asking Jesus to increase your faith. How does he respond?

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. *'The Apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!'* What people, events or resources strengthen your faith? What are you doing to learn more about your faith? Do you think that because you sometimes doubt, that your faith is inadequate?
4. *"If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea', and it would obey you."* Are you encouraged that despite your faith being as small as a mustard seed you can still accomplish wondrous deeds? What seeds of faith have you planted that have flourished?
5. *'Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded?'* What are you grateful to God for? How do you show your gratitude?
6. *"We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty."* Do you consider being a servant of God an obligation or duty rather than a privilege? Do you expect privileges you expect when you carry out an act of service? Who do you know in your community who serves others selflessly?

St Oscar Romero's words can give us strength: "Where injustice, violence, and brute force seem to hold sway, the just person can feel helpless. Nevertheless, we have the vigorous force of God, which is faith. If we who are tiny before the forces of the world have faith in God, then we are more powerful than all the armies of the world."

Pope Francis tells us:

Today, the Reading from the Gospel begins like this: "The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!'" Yes, Lord, our faith is small, our faith is weak and fragile, but we offer it to you as it is, so that you can make it grow'

And how does the Lord answer us? He responds: "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea', and it would obey you". A mustard seed is tiny, yet Jesus says that faith this size, small but true and sincere, suffices to achieve what is humanly impossible, unthinkable. And it is true! We all know people who are simple, humble, but whose faith is so strong it can move mountains! Let us think, for example, of some mothers and fathers who face very difficult situations; or of some sick, and even gravely ill, people who transmit serenity to those who come to visit them. These people, because of their faith, do not boast about what they do, rather, as Jesus asks in the Gospel, they say: "'We

are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty". How many people among us have such strong, humble faith, and what good they do!

October is also the month of the Rosary. Let us join spiritually together in this act of trust in our Mother, and let us receive from her hands the crown of the Rosary: The Rosary is a school of prayer, the Rosary is a school of faith!

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.