

Lectio Divina: “Rejoice and be Glad”



Image from the World Wide Web
All Saints, Painted by Elizabeth wang (1942-2016),

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 enable us reflect on the qualities that are expected of us if we want to be a disciple of Christ.

Reading Matthew 5:1-12a

At that time: Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.'

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 may even want to imagine you are listening to Jesus inviting us into a blessed world.

1. What is this passage saying to you?
2. As you ponder the Beatitudes, how do they make you feel? Which of them most caught your attention; most touched your heart; most challenged you; most comforted you? Are there any you found uncomfortable? Do you feel 'blessed' and joyful? From where, from whom, does this joy come
3. '*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*' Are you meek? Do you show a kindness and gentleness to people you meet? Do you respect the dignity of others?
4. '*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*' Do you hunger and thirst for what is right? Do you dedicate your energies to rectifying the injustices you see around you? Do you fight for the homeless, refugees, victims of human trafficking, those who live in poverty, those who do not receive a fair wage?
5. '*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God*'. Are you a peacemaker? Do you try to reconcile and bring people together when you notice rifts in the family and community? Do you feel being a peacemaker is your responsibility or would you rather not get involved?
6. '*Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.*' Have you ever felt excluded or hated or persecuted for your beliefs? Did you feel the love of God perhaps through someone unexpected? Do you know someone who is marginalised? What can you do to help them feel included?
7. '*Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven*' What brings you joy? What blessings can you give thanks to God for?

Pope Francis tells us:

The page from today's Gospel invites us to reflect on the profound sense of having faith, which consists in our trusting completely in the Lord. It is about demolishing worldly idols in order to open our hearts to the true and living God. He alone can give our life that fullness so deeply desired and yet difficult to attain.

We are called to happiness, to be blessed, and we become so as of now, to the measure in which we place ourselves on the side of God, of his Kingdom, on the side of what is not ephemeral but rather endures for eternal life. We are happy if we acknowledge we are needy before God — and this is very important: “Lord, I need you” — and if, like him and with him, we are close to the poor, the suffering and the hungry. We too are like this before God: we are poor, suffering, we are hungry before God. Although we possess worldly goods, we experience joy when we do not idolize or sell our souls out to them, but are able to share them with our brothers and sisters. Today the liturgy invites us once again to question ourselves about this and to be truthful in our heart.

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.