



Jpshtinpowers - 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 mystery that Jesus, by his crucifixion, is shown to be King and Saviour of all.

Reading Luke 23:35-43

At that time: The rulers scoffed at Jesus, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

One of the criminals who were hanged there railed at Jesus, saying, 'Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.' And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' And he said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.'

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 at the temple with Jesus listening to his predictions.

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 you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!'* Do you ever threaten God in prayer? Do you ever treat God as though you know more than he does regarding what is good and what is not?
4. *'Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!'* When have you had doubt in your heart when it comes to your faith? What helps you to better trust in God's will for you?
5. *'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'* When have you felt forgotten by a friend or by someone you love? How do you keep Jesus at the centre of your everyday life?
6. *'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.'* When have you felt the forgiving hand of Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? When have you felt the love and compassion of Jesus despite your shortcomings? Have there been instances in your life when you needed to be more compassionate to others?

Pope Francis tells us:

Brothers, sisters, today, from the cross, our king looks upon us a *brasa aduerte* (with open arms). It is up to us to choose whether we will be onlookers or involved. What will I be? We see the crises of the present time, the decline of faith, the lack of participation... What are we to do? Are we content to theorize and criticize, or do we roll up our sleeves, take life in hand, and pass from taking refuge in excuses to the commitment of prayer and service? All of us think we know what is wrong with society, with the world, and with the Church. We talk about it all day long, but then what do we do? Do we soil our hands like our God, nailed to the cross? Or do we stand with hands in our pockets, as mere onlookers? Today, as Jesus, naked on the cross, unveils God and destroys every false image of his kingship, let us look to him and thus find the courage to look at ourselves, to follow the path of confident trust and intercession, and to make servants of ourselves, in order to reign with him. "Remember, Lord! Remember!" Let us make this more often our prayer. Thank you.

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.

If you are King of the Jews, save yourself. When have I relied too much on myself and not enough on God? When have I placed the approval of others ahead of doing what is right?

Are you not the Christ? When have I allowed doubt to creep into my heart? What prayers and resources will help me trust in God more fully?

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. When have I felt forgotten by those I love? How can I keep my relationship with Jesus at the center of my life?

• What is going through your head as you hear the jeering - "He saved others, let him save himself"? Are you puzzled by this because those who are persecuting Jesus realise he came to save all of us? Do you wonder why, despite this realisation, they are jeering?

• When you hear the soldiers joining the mocking, do you wonder why? Do you think they are copying the leaders or do you think that they too have heard of Jesus' saving power? Do you too, having experienced Jesus' healing power, want to tell him to save himself from this terrible situation? Do you realise that only by the cross and resurrection can he redeem the world? Or is the situation too horrific for you to see that this is how it must be? That this is not the end but the beginning of salvation for the world?

• What is going through your mind when you hear one of the criminals admonish the other saying "Have you no fear of God at all? ...we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong". Do you see that this criminal recognises Jesus as a just man? That he recognises his own sinfulness? Do you see that salvation has already begun to work in this gruesome situation? Do you see that this man's humility is the ground by which to meet God?

• How do you feel when you hear the exchange between the good thief and Jesus - "remember me when you come into your kingdom." "Indeed, I promise you," Jesus replied "today you will be with me in paradise." How do you feel when Christ promises his Kingdom to a penitent thief? Do you too think that Jesus' promise of redemption and forgiveness is for you too?

• When you hear Jesus' promise to a criminal, is that proof to you that God is listening to your voice up until the last minutes of your life? Do you find this comforting that God is listening to us amidst our troubles? That Jesus is telling us not to despair? Do you, like this criminal, recognise that Jesus is indeed King and Saviour of all?

Luke's Gospel has been loaded with surprises: the poor are rich, sinners find salvation, the Kingdom of God is found in our midst. Here we see the greatest surprise of all. We are confronted with the crucified Jesus, whom faith tells us

is King and Savior of all. The irony is that the inscription placed on the cross, perhaps in mockery, contains the profoundest of truth. As the leaders jeer, the thief crucified by his side recognizes Jesus as Messiah and King, and finds salvation.

Jesus is King, but not the kind of king we might have imagined or expected. His kingship was hidden from many of his contemporaries, but those who had the eyes of faith were able to see. As modern disciples of Jesus, we, too, struggle at times to recognize Jesus as King. Today's Gospel invites us to make our own judgment. With eyes of faith, we, too, recognize that Jesus, the crucified One, is indeed King and Savior of all.

The people stayed there watching. Why do you never take a stand concerning the events? Everything that you have lived, listened to, seen... you cannot just throw it away only because an obstacle seems to make it difficult! Move, do something!

“If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself”. How many attempts and threats do we make with God in prayer? If You are God why do You not intervene? There are so many innocent people who suffer. If You love me, do what I tell You and I will believe You... When will you ever stop dealing with the Lord as if you knew more than He what is good and what is not?

Are we like Jesus as we exercise our duties of parenting and leadership of Church and State in truth, honesty and forgiveness? When were the times that we experienced Jesus' power in our lives?