

## **Lectio Divina:        Are you the one who is to come?**



Image from the World Wide Web John the Baptist in Prison by Giousto de Menabuoi (1320–1391)

### **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 hear. 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 are able to "Rejoice in the Lord always" knowing that he is near.

## **Reading      Matthew 11:2-11**

At that time: When John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'

And Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

'What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.

'Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.'

## 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 those disciples sent by John to ask Jesus, *'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'*

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. *"Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"* Do you ever lose heart or have doubts in your faith journey? Do you sometimes need reassurance that you are taking the right path regarding your faith journey? Who do you go to for that reassurance?
4. *'And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.'* When have you been treated with scorn because of your faith? In what way can you proclaim the truth with compassion and patience? In what way are you challenged by the truth?
5. *"What then did you go out to see?"* Have you ever been surprised that the person whom you seek reassurances from regarding your faith is not who you expected? Do you ever have pre-conceived ideas regarding prophets? Do these preconceived ideas ever mask the truth they are proclaiming to you? As you listen to the prophets of today, what do you expect to see and hear? What are you waiting for in this season of Advent?

## Pope Francis tells us:

The time of Advent stimulates us to this precisely with the question that John the Baptist asks Jesus: "Are you the one who must come or do we have to wait for another one?" (Mt 11.3). We think: all his life John has waited for the Messiah; his way of life, his own body is shaped by this expectation. For this reason too Jesus praises him with those words: no one is greater than him among those born of a woman (cf. Mt 11:11). And yet, he too had to convert to Jesus. Like John, we too are called to recognize the face that God has chosen to take in Jesus Christ, humble and merciful.

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.