Lectio Divina: Come, you who my Father has blessed



The earliest portrayal of the Last Judgment is in a sixth century mosaic in Ravenna

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 out 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: 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 can ask for the grace to be a loving person filled with care and compassion for all those we meet and to serve the King using the abundant talents he bestowed on us.

Reading Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus said to his disciples "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will

say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. " For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me."

Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the King will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me".

Next he will say to those on his left hand, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me."

Then it will be their turn to ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?" Then he will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me". And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life."

Questions for Reflection

As you slowly read this Gospel passage allow the parable of the last Judgement to soak into your mind. You may want to ponder on the mosaic at the top of the page, or the words of Pope Francis who says “may looking at the Last Judgement never frighten us: rather, may it impel us to live the present better. God offers us this time with mercy and patience so that we may learn every day to recognize him in the poor and in the lowly”.

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 Jesus said in this parable that you found uncomfortable?

3. *“All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats.”* How are you preparing to meet the Lord on the day of judgment? How are you increasing your longing to live with God for all eternity? How do you get the sense of his longing to bring you into his fold?

4. *“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?”* As you reflect on this last week, what acts of kindness, generosity and mercy have you shown to those you have encountered?

5. "*I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.*" What opportunities for kindness, generosity and mercy have you let slip away? What underlies that failure – selfishness, indifference, fear, prejudice? Who are "the least of these" in your daily life, neighbourhood, or community right now?

Let us now spend 10 minutes in the company of Jesus. Ask him to help you look back over the last few days and recall the times when you have acted as He asked, and give thanks for those thimes. Speak honestly to Jesus about where you feel incapable, tired, or blind to the needs around you.

Let us now 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 English Standard Version of the Bible, Catholic Edition (ESV-CE), published by Asian Trading Corporation and Crossway, 2017.