

Lectio Divina--Session 5

In this session the words of Scripture have been provided for you. It is suggested that you simply print out this session, grab a notebook, and enter into the spirit of Lectio plus journaling.

Prayer:

Come Holy Spirit, pour into my heart from the depths of the Trinity, the rays of your light.

Help me listen more deeply to the words of scripture you have enflamed.

May your holy fire penetrate my heart and minds so that I in turn may penetrate your words at ever deepening levels of understanding, and response.

Lectio: (Prayerful Reading) Luke 1: 26-38

The Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her he said "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David, His Father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel "How can this be since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Meditatio: (Ruminating on the scripture)

Reading this second time be aware of the difference between reading for information and reading for formation. Though bible study can be an important background to Lectio Divina, it is not, in itself, Lectio. In reading about the bible we read for information. As M.R. Mulholland explains:

There must be this constant interplay between the informational and formational modes of reading. But the informational mode is only the "front porch" of the role of scripture in spiritual formation. It is the point of entry into the text. But once we have crossed the porch we must enter into that deeper encounter with the Word that is the formational approach, if we are to experience our false self being shaped by the Word toward wholeness in the image of Christ. . . . Only in the formational mode where that shift of the inner posture of our being takes place, can we become listeners. Only in that mode can we become receptive and accessible to be addressed by the living Word of God. (Shaped by the Word, p. 62)

Such listening is especially important with familiar scripture passages such as the one from Luke. The scene of the Annunciation has been read over and over in our liturgies, and painted countless times by artists in chapels and palaces throughout the ages. In our own reading of this passage it is important to find the way the words can form us. An example of such listening can be found in Barbara E. Reid's column, *A Dwelling Place for God in the Dec. 15 issue of America magazine.*

While not spelling out how, Gabriel Reassures Mary that in the midst of this messy situation, God will bring forth blessing, holiness and salvation for all. Twice God's messenger assures her that she is grace-filled and is favored in God's sight, even if others will question this. He also reassures her that she is not alone. Her relative, Elizabeth, will help mentor and support her. Without knowing how God will accomplish all this, Mary opens a space for God to dwell within her, enabling the divine to make a new home within all humankind.

Oratio: (prayer rising like incense from the third reading)

Having listened by reading and reflection, you can now speak in prayer.

If you know what the text says and what the texts says to you, now what do you say to God?

Fr. Bernardo Olivera

How do you express praise or thanks for blessing, salvation, and support? What do you say about the presence of the Divine in your life? How do you acknowledge radical dependency on God in the face of mystery?

Contemplatio: (Reading again, we come to rest in the Word)

There is an inner dynamic in the evolution of all true love that leads to a level of communication "too deep for words." There the lover becomes inarticulate, falls silent, and the beloved receives the silence as eloquence. . . .a simple and time-honored way of prayer. . . through a gentle unfolding, opens us to that deep level of communication with the Divine. From earliest times in Christian tradition, the way has been known as "Lectio Divina." (Thelma Hall, Too Deep for Words, p. 7)

Response (Taking the word into daily life)

One good way to respond is to journal our session with the Word. The following questions might help.

What word or phrase stood out here for me? What image do the words evoke in my mind? What could God be saying in the words that has meaning for this day in my journey? What could the Spirit want me to take from this image? Where is God at work in this saying for me? How have these words opened me to God's presence?

We also act out our response. We ask ourselves how we have been visited by God. What experiences have we had, of help, for example, in times of stress and difficulty? How can we reflect that help in others' lives?

What have we seen or heard of the presence of God in our lives? Who are the people in our lives who mentor and support as Elizabeth did Mary? How can we duplicate that support for others? Who needs us that we have not responded to? How can we be a channel for God's action in the world -- today?

Having mulled the words of scripture, rested in the word and felt the presence, we return to daily life more aware of God's presence, trying to act out of that awareness instead of in our usual, possibly defensive patterns. As St. Francis of Assisi has said: "preach the gospel at all times; if necessary use words."

Lectio Divina--Session 6

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