

Learning to Trust

Go to: “Lectio Divina” found on Vimeo.com/Cistercian

This information will teach you how to do the prayer process called Lectio Divina.

We will use these Scriptures for the meditations.

Mary Accepts God’s Invitation to give birth to, and mother, Jesus

Luke, Ch 1: 26 -38

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called ^[b] the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.”

³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

Matthew Ch 1: 18-25

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about ^[d]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet ^[e] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, ^[f] because he will save his people from their sins.”

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” ^[g] (which means “God with us”).

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Some things to remember about Mary and Joseph.

Mary was about 14 years old at the time of the Annunciation. Although of young age to our standards she was raised in the Temple by the High Priest named Joachim and her mother named Anna. Mary was well educated in both spiritual and temporal matters. Both of her parents were of advanced age and childless. Mary was conceived due to her parents' trusting prayers. In our contemporary terms Mary was a "preacher's kid, a PK".

There is every indication that she was raised in an emotionally and spiritual healthy environment and was fervent in her Jewish faith.

Joseph was considerably older than Mary. He was thought of in his community as a mature, educated, spiritually sound individual. And he was an established carpenter. He was selected to be Mary's husband according to the method of his times. There are stories of a Divine intervention on his behalf.

Joseph and Mary were engaged at the time of the Annunciation, not married, and were not living together and were not sexually active. Engagement was a status held much more seriously than we hold it today. Most believe that Joseph married Mary soon after she told him of her pregnancy. He had the option not to marry her. He could have banished her or had her killed for being pregnant out of wedlock.

Below is a list of reflective questions. Look deep within yourself and ask the Holy Spirit to inspire, direct and heal you. Ask Him how this Scripture applies to your life. Answer each question completely and honestly. Write down your observations and insights. Use the information from the video, "Lectio Divina." These reflections will use the above Scripture in the manner of "Lectio Divina", or Divine Reading.

Take your time do not rush it through. You might want to view the video several times throughout these weeks.

Use a separate sheet of paper to write your reflections.

In this experience of "Lectio Divina" we will examine each character and event in this Scripture story and allow the Holy Spirit to help us examine ourselves.

Week 1

Scripture: ²⁶ “In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.”

Reflection question to be answered.

What do you imagine was going through Mary’s mind when she experienced this?

What do I know about the person of Mary? Where did she come from? What was her developmental background?

What do I know about me? Where did I come from? What is my developmental background? Did I come from a family that gave their love inconsistently? Were my parents emotionally available? As a child did I feel accepted?

How does my adult self give and receive love? Am I worthy of trust? Do I say what I mean? Do I learn from my errors/sins? Do I disclose myself to others? Do I generously give my time to others? Do I sacrifice my wants for the needs of others? Do I hold grudges? Do I forgive easily? Am I open and flexible or rigid in my relationships?

How would my friends describe me?

Week 2

Scripture: ²⁸ “The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

Reflection question to be answered. You may need to spend more than one week on this.

What do you imagine was going through Mary’s mind when she heard this?

What words would God use to describe you? Would he say to you, “Well done good and faithful servant”?

If I relate to Jesus at all it is from a distance. I believe in my head but not my heart.

I sometimes look to Jesus to be my savior, helper, sustainer but I doubt if He really cares enough about me personally. Hell feels closer to me than heaven.

Jesus could not forgive my sins. They are too many and too big.

Although I speak all the right words about Jesus and my relationship with Him I do not really trust Him. I avoid His lordship over my life. I have to be in charge of my life.

God the Father and the Holy Spirit are intellectual concepts and are not realities that dynamically affect my life.

I am afraid to trust. No one, even the Divine, is trustworthy. My whole life has validated this. I know this to be true. I am “wired” not to believe.

I often want to believe. Honestly, I am riding on the faith of others and what I read. Although again, being honest, I do not read much. Certainly I do not read Scripture much or go to church much, or even pray much. If I give five minutes a day to God He is lucky. My laziness and lame excuses of being so busy are really evidence that I do not believe that Jesus is close to me, cares about me, and can affect me in positive way. Let’s be honest I am more about myself than Jesus.

Week 3

Scripture: ²⁹“Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.”

Reflection question to be answered.

What do you imagine was going through Mary’s mind when she heard this?

What troubles you? What are you afraid of? What do you worry about? How controlling are you? What would your friends say about you in regards to these questions?

When you feel powerless how do you get your power back? What are your principal emotional resources, e.g. your check book, your employment, your social status, etc?

Do you know God the Father, I am not referring to the person of Jesus but God the Father, well enough to feel favored by Him? Reflect on your favored status or lack thereof.

Week 4

Scripture: ³¹“You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.”

Reflection questions to be answered. This may take more than one week.

What do you imagine was going through Mary’s mind when she heard this?

Has God every asked you to do something absolutely incredible? If He has not why do you think that you have not been asked? If you were asked what was your response? Could God trust you do something REALLY important? Why could He trust you or not trust you? What do you answers to these questions mean/affect you?

If God were to ask you to kill one of your children what would you do? If God were to ask you to go to Africa to be a missionary what would you do?

God has commanded you to worship Him every Sunday. What have you done?

He has commanded you to refrain from sex prior to marriage. What have you done?

God has commanded you to honor your parents. What have you done?

God has commanded you to obey all lawful authority. What have you done?

Could God say to you, “Well done good and faithful servant.”?

In light of the above questions and reflections are you a person that could be trusted? Can imperfect people be trusted?

Week 5

Scripture: ³⁴“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

Reflection questions to be answered.

What do you imagine was going through Mary’s mind when she heard this? Was she doubting, not trusting God or perhaps merely asking a biological question?

If it were you what would you ask the angel? Would it be something like “yah sure.” “How are you going to do that?” “You’re kidding!”

Or might it go something like this? I want to trust you Lord but if I do what are you going to do to me? I want to be in charge of something here. Wait a moment. Me pregnant that is too much, how about something more realistic, or something not so difficult. You know Lord that I am busy and have other responsibilities. What me risk??? I haven’t done so well in keeping promises in that past how can I do such a big thing now?

Week 6

Scripture: ³⁵“The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called ^[b] the Son of God.”

Reflective questions to be answered.

What do you imagine was going through Mary’s mind when she heard this?

What would be going through your mind if you were told this? Have you ever been told by God that the answer to your questions are mystical, not of this earth, or just plain do not make sense? What was your reply at that time to what He told you?

Do you trust God to be faithful to what He has said in Scripture? Is God truly able to keep his promises? Does He have the ability and intention to do what He has said He would do? A note here. I am NOT referring to what we would like Him to do, or some preacher said He would do but rather what God has said He would do as clearly documented in Scripture and has always been taught in His church.

Now if you answered yes to the above then why have you answered as you have to:

1. God has commanded you to worship Him every Sunday. What have you done?
2. He has commanded you to refrain from sex prior to marriage. What have you done?
3. God has commanded you to honor your parents. What have you done?
4. God has commanded you to obey all lawful authority. What have you done?

What conclusion can you honestly come to in regards to truly trusting God? Is God not trustworthy or are you not trustworthy? Do you have a need for forgiveness? Do you trust God to forgive you? What has God said about forgiveness?

Week 7

Scripture: “Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.”

Reflective questions to be answered.

What do you imagine was going through Mary’s mind when she heard this?

Special note: Let me remind you that Mary asked “How can this be?” In an effort to understand Mary asked so that she could cooperate. Secondly she did not ask for proof. In our Scripture for this week we see that the angel offered proof. God has offered proof thought out Scripture and when someone demanded proof things went badly for them.

Having said the above: have you asked for proof of God’s will for you. “Give me a sign Lord?” Why did you require proof/sign from the Almighty? Are you mightier than He? Is this an effort to control what happens to you if you were to say yes? Do I have a good reason to trust God the Father? Do I need to trust God before I can deeply trust any person?

This is a particularly interesting proof for Mary. Elizabeth’s situation since it is similar to her parents’ as they waited in old age for the birth of Mary. Do you frequently reflect on God’s action in your life past and present? Does it bring you comfort or anxiety? Does God really want to be involved with you and the development of your life? Give examples how He has been intimately close to you. If you cannot give a list why not?

Week 8

Scripture: ³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.”

Reflective questions to be answered.

What do you imagine was going through Mary’s mind when she said this?

Considering the scope of this narrative Mary is quietly humble at the announcement and quickly submits. Her submission is as a servant.

If God the Father told you that He highly favored you and that you were to do something that would change everything for all time how would you respond? Some people might broadcast the news to everyone they knew saying “God told me that....” Or perhaps even use those words to validate their own opinions. Is that a trust worth behavior?

How have you been a good servant to the Lord? Give some examples. Would you prefer to see God the Father as friend or Master? Why? Is it easier to relate to Jesus than to God the Father? Why? Can you trust Jesus more easily than His Father? Why?

Week 9

Scripture: ¹⁸“This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about^[d]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet^[e] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

What do you imagine was going through Joseph’s mind when Mary told him of her pregnancy?

Joseph was a man of the law and was passionately in love with Mary. How do you reconcile what is right, the law, with what is merciful? Do you think that Joseph had a difficult time believing Mary’s story? Did he have to forgive her? What for? Mary took an action that would affect Joseph without first giving him the opportunity to voice his consent. Was this fair? Do you think this was an act of trust on Mary’s part? Trust in whom?

When someone changes your life without your consent what do you do? Can that be an act of trust in them believing that it is for your best interest or does it seem like an intrusion into your freedoms? Where is servanthood in this matter?

It seems that Joseph spent considerable time thinking about Mary’s best interests rather than his hurt and self interest. When someone offends you what do you do? Is that a trust worthy behavior.?

Week 10

Scripture: ²⁰“But after he had considered this...”

What do you imagine was going through Joseph’s mind when he considered his options/feelings? Do you think that Joseph remembered the good times with Mary, including her personal relationship with God, her family and community? Did Joseph believe that Mary was a trust worthy person? How might that have contributed to his considerations?

What goes through your mind when someone offends you or breaks the trust? Is it more about you than them? Are you caught up in revenge, threats of leaving, holding on to anger, using the event as a method of gaining power over the other? Do you remind yourself of how the other has sacrificed for you in the past, and the goodness of their character? Do you focus on forgiveness? Is forgiveness necessary for trust to be reestablished? Do you focus on the future of the relationship rather than on the hurtful event in the past? Have you broken the trust of your promises with the person who has offended you by holding on to your pain and not doing every merciful thing you can?

Week 11

Scripture: ²⁰“But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^[f] because he will save his people from their sins.”

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”^[g] (which means “God with us”).

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.”

What kind of emotional/spiritual movement did Joseph have to go through to come to be able to hear the Lord?

What kind of changes do you have to make to not only accept and forgive but to move into a new and better relationship with someone who has offended you? The essence of reconciliation is not just forgiveness, rebuilding the trust but an all out effort to build a new and better relationship with the offender.

Joseph took Mary back not on condition, not where he had to monitor her future behaviors but a total lifelong absolute commitment of husband to a wife.

Can you do the same? Why? Why not? What is pressing you forward? What is holding you back? Are you opening yourself up to hearing from God and receiving His grace to trust in Him to trust in each other?

If you are not willing to that what are your options?

Summary statements:

I hope this has been a growth filled experience for you and that you have grown in trust towards God the Father and others.

Problems with trusting: If your childhood caregivers were inconsistent, emotionally unavailable or rejecting shame may have been created in you. Shame is the belief that something is fundamentally wrong with you.

Some people hold on to negative emotions because they believe that they give them comfort or power.

If you are not trustworthy you would tend to see God and others as not trustworthy.

Trust is established within a relationship when time has been spent assessing the relationship through personal disclosure, sacrificing one's wants for the other's needs, giving time and attention to the other. Introspection on your own trustworthiness and do you trust your own decisions. Do you learn from your errors? Are you willing to risk and be future thinking? Leaving the past behind is important. Be a forgiving person and see people and situations as God does. That is full of mercy.

Things to consider: You cannot trust others unless you first trust God.

There are levels of trust. You would trust your gardener less than you would your marriage partner.

Does the person have the ability and intention to be faithful to their promises, are they worthy of trust? A sociopath or narcissist does not have the ability to be trustworthy.

Love and trust do not necessarily go together. We are called to love everyone but be very careful whom we trust.

It is necessary to forgive before you can trust.

These Scripture came to mind when I was preparing this.

“Create a clean heart in me, O, god, and put a new and steadfast spirit within me. Turn away your face from my sins, O, God, and blot out all my guilt.”