A large, good heart

e Lord has made your heart new can it be open and ready to listen...

God calls you to the silent solitude in which the two of you can converse in prayer. *God wants to speak to your heart*.

The Bible speaks of the heart as the center of the human person, the deepest and most authentic part of us, and as the seat of our faculty of understanding. And so, the *principal organ* used in *lectio divina* is the heart, because it is the nucleus in which each human persan exists as a unique, unrepeatable mystery. Yet you have read of an uncircumcised heart (Dt 30:6; Rom 2:29), a heart of stone (Ez 11:19), a divided heart (Ps 119:13 and Jer 32:29), and a blind heart (Lam 3:65). All these expressions indicate a heart that is far from God, that has not been touched by faith. A believer's heart can become weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the concerns of this life (Lk 21:34). It can become sick, hardened and so blocked up that it can no longer recognize or understand the Lord's words and actions (Mk 6:52 and 8:17). It can become unstable, inconstant, and tend to
lose or forget the Word (2 Pt 3:16; Lk 8:13). A heart can begin to draw its nourishment from what is merely human, from the latest ideologies or even from its own pride, which is the worst sin. So when you are getting ready to spend time listening to God, take your heart in your hands and raise it up toward God, so that God may make it a heart of flesh: whole, steady and cleansed. Only when your heart becomes like that of a little child can it receive God's gifts (Mk 10:15).

Only when the Lord has made your heart new can it be open and ready to listen. The Lord has promised to give a new heart to anyone who asks (Ez 18:31), to soften and mold our hearts until they fit the Word. But before we will raise them up, we must be convinced in the first place that these hearts of ours are hardened (Ps 119:36).

Every day God cries out to us: 'If only you would listen to my voice! Harden not your hearts!' (Ps 95:8; Heb 3:7). The hardened heart claims that it is God's Word which is hard. Even believers do this: 'This is a hard word; who can accept it?' (Jn 6:60). Ask God to give you *a big heart, a heart that can hear* (*leb shomea'*), as Solomon the wise once did (1 K 3:5).
When you sit down to do *lectio divina*, remember the parable in which the Lord is pictured as a sower in the act of sowing the Word. You are one of the four types of soil: either rocky, or a footpath open to everything that passes, or a patch of thorns, or good, rich soil. The Word must find this good, rich soil in you; then *'when you have heard the Word with a good, whole heart, (en kardía kalê kaì agathê), you will keep it and produce fruit by faithful perseverance'* (Lk 8:15).

When someone whose heart has been purified, focused and made whole celebrates *lectio divina*, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will come and make their dwelling place with that single-hearted person (Jn 14:23 and 15:4).

The human heart was made for the Word and the Word for the heart. The lyrics of Psalm 119:111 describe this marriage, in which God's Word becomes your own and your heart sings out the joy of belonging to God.
This is the heart of a disciple, a heart so receptive to God's intentions that it can experience the Word *with little or no explanation*, a heart truly seated at Christ's feet and ready to listen like Mary of Bethany (Lk 10:39), a heart capable of storing the biblical words and reflecting on them as Mary the Mother of Jesus did (Lk 2:19 and 51).

This kind of heart can be yours. *'Lift up your hearts!'* the liturgy cries out ut the beginning of the Eucharist. 'Lift up your hearts!' is also the invitation call to *lectio divina*.

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