

Exercise in Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina

1. Pray that God might open our hearts to hear His words through the text.
2. First reading. Read the passage slowly, being attentive to any one word or phrase that strikes you from the text.
3. Minute of silent reflection. "What word or phrase is God drawing out of the Scripture for me?"
4. Second Reading. Read the same passage again, being attentive to any one word or phrase that strikes you. Is it the same or does something else jump out?
5. Minute of silent reflection. "What has the Lord said to me in this reading with regard to my life today?"
6. Third Reading. Read the passage once more, allowing God to elaborate on that word or phrase.
7. Minute of silent reflection. "What does the Lord want me to do today/this week?" What concrete action would bring the chosen phrase to life?
8. Respond from the heart: What do I want to tell God? (praise, thanksgiving, a promise to him, contrition, etc.)
9. Quiet resting in God without words.

The text we will use today:

In the sixth month, 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, favored one! 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 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. *Luke 1:26-38*

ABOUT LECTIO DIVINA

"Lectio Divina", a Latin term, means "divine reading" and describes a way of reading the Scriptures whereby we gradually let go of our own agenda and open ourselves to what God wants to say to us. In the 12th century, a Carthusian monk called Guigo, described the stages which he saw as essential to the practice of Lectio Divina. There are various ways of practicing Lectio Divina either individually or in groups but Guigo's description remains fundamental.

He said that the first stage is *lectio* (reading) where we read the Word of God, slowly and reflectively so that it sinks into us. Any passage of Scripture can be used for this way of prayer but the passage should not be too long.

The second stage is *meditatio* (reflection) where we think about the text we have chosen and ruminate upon it so that we take from it what God wants to give us.

The third stage is *oratio* (response) where we leave our thinking aside and simply let our hearts speak to God. This response is inspired by our reflection on the Word of God.

The final stage of Lectio Divina is *contemplatio* (rest) where we let go not only of our own ideas, plans and meditations but also of our holy words and thoughts. We simply rest in the Word of God. We listen at the deepest level of our being to God who speaks within us with a still small voice. As we listen, we are gradually transformed from within. Obviously this transformation will have a profound effect on the way we actually live and the way we live is the test of the authenticity of our prayer. We must take what we read in the Word of God into our daily lives.

These stages of Lectio Divina are not fixed rules of procedure but simply guidelines as to how the prayer normally develops. Its natural movement is towards greater simplicity, with less and less talking and more listening. Gradually the words of Scripture begin to dissolve and the Word is revealed before the eyes of our heart. How much time should be given to each stage depends very much on whether it is used individually or in a group. If Lectio Divina is used for group prayer, obviously more structure is needed than for individual use. In group prayer, much will depend on the type of group. Lectio Divina may involve discussing the implications of the Word of God for daily life but it cannot be reduced to this. The movement of the prayer is towards silence. If the group is comfortable with silence, more time could be spent resting in the Word.

The practice of Lectio Divina as a way of praying the Scriptures has been a fruitful source of growing in relationship with Christ for many centuries and in our own day is being rediscovered by many individuals and groups. The Word of God is alive and active and will transform each of us if we open ourselves to receive what God wants to give us.

Quoted from www.ocarm.org

Benedict XVI Reflects on "Dei Verbum" (excerpts)

Castel Gandolfo, September 16, 2005

"*Lectio Divina* Will Bring to the Church a New Spiritual Springtime"

The Dogmatic Constitution "Dei Verbum," whose drafting I personally witnessed as a young theologian, taking part in the lively discussions that went with it, begins with a deeply meaningful sentence: "Dei Verbum religiose audiens et fidenter proclamans, Sacrosancta Synodus ..." ["Hearing the Word of God with reverence, and proclaiming it with faith, the Sacred Synod ..."] (n. 1). With these words the Council points out a descriptive aspect of the Church: she is a community that listens to and proclaims the Word of God. ...

The Church knows well that Christ lives in the Sacred Scriptures. For this very reason -- as the Constitution stresses -- she has always venerated the divine Scriptures in the same way as she venerates the Body of the Lord (cf. "Dei Verbum," n. 21). In view of this, St. Jerome, cited by the conciliar Document, said that ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ (cf. "Dei Verbum," n. 25). ...

In this context, I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of "**Lectio divina**": "the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart" (cf. "Dei Verbum," n. 25). If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church -- I am convinced of it -- a new spiritual springtime.

As a strong point of biblical ministry, "Lectio divina" should therefore be increasingly encouraged, also through the use of new methods, carefully thought through and in step with the times. It should never be forgotten that the Word of God is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (cf. Psalm 119[118]:105).