

Sacred Scripture: “The Father Comes Lovingly”

Michael A. Havercamp

DLI Retreat

An opportunity to reflect on ways we can be awakened to the mystery of God calling us into communion with Him (Catechism # 17). Prayer, spiritual reading, reconciliation and celebration will be the basis upon which we move through the day.

DLI in general (spiritual formation)

A key desired outcome of the Lay Institute is that all participants become effective disciples of Jesus Christ, experiencing an ever-deepening interior conversion and growing in their personal practice of prayer and the sacraments. A block of time at the beginning of each day will be set aside to discuss tools, practices, techniques and issues aimed at fostering personal spiritual formation.

Review:

Sr. Marcia has spoken about personal ideal.

My brother Gary has spoken beautifully about the sacrament of reconciliation.

I want to talk to you about the power of the word: Sacred Scripture.

Personal testimony:

- Peace Corps Morocco
- The encounter

“In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven
comes lovingly to meet his children and talks to them.”

DV, 21

Church Fathers

The early church fathers knew the truth of this. They revered the Scriptures and readily encouraged their reading. They teach us that reading the Bible is not just an intellectual activity, rather it is an act of “going to school with the Holy Spirit”.

Ignorance of the Scriptures
is ignorance of Christ.
St. Jerome

Origen says,
"The Word of God is in your heart.
The Word digs in this soil so that the spring may gush out."

Anyone who wants to be always united to God
must pray often and read the Bible often.
For in prayer it is we who are speaking to God,
but in the readings it is God speaking to us.
Isidore, lived between 560-636 AD

"Like a tree planted by streams of water," [Ps. 1:3] the soul is irrigated by the Bible
and acquires vigor, produces tasty fruit, namely, true faith, and is beautified
with a thousand green leaves, namely, actions that please God.
The Bible, in fact, leads us towards pure holiness and holy actions.
In it we find encouragement to all the virtues
and the warning to flee from evil.
John Damascene, 8th century
On the Orthodox Faith

"All sacred Scripture is but one book, and that one book is Christ,
because divine Scripture speaks of Christ,
and all divine Scripture is fulfilled in Christ."
Hugh of St. Victor, 12th century

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Middle Ages: Thomas Aquinas

While the great Doctor of the Church, St. Thomas Aquinas is most remembered and revered for his more systematic theological reflections in the *Summa theologiae* and *Summa contra gentiles* (the former was placed on the altar during the deliberations of the Council of Trent), he might have been quite surprised by this legacy.

Most of his time as a university master of theology was dedicated to commenting on Scripture. In fact, it is likely that, were he here today, he would consider these commentaries his most important work. While the dialectical disputations and Aristotelian philosophies of the *Summas* gave him the most enduring notoriety, they were not the object of his public work. They were private studies. He never taught them. What he taught was Sacred Scripture.

Because he knew that “in the sacred books, the Father comes lovingly to meet his children.”

"It must be said that Sacred Scripture is divinely ordered to this: that through it, the truth necessary for salvation may be made known to us."¹

Modern Era

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical on faith and reason, proclaimed. . .

“The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord. . . and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God’s word and of Christ’s body.”

Fides et Ratio, 21

“Both scripture and tradition must be accepted and honored with equal devotion and reverence.”

DV, 9

“To what extent has the word of God become more fully
the soul of theology and the inspiration of the whole of Christian living,
as *Dei Verbum* sought?”

Pope John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*

“The sacred synod also earnestly and especially urges all the Christian faithful to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the ‘excellent knowledge of Christ’ (Phil. 3:8). . . And let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together; for ‘we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine saying.’”

Fides et Ratio, 21; St. Ambrose, *On the Duties of Ministers I*.

Q: What about you? Do you make frequent reading of the Scriptures? Is the word of God a foundational part of your devotional life? Do you know that “in the sacred books, the Father comes lovingly to meet you and speak to you”?

Introduction to Lectio Divina:

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.

Pope Benedict XVI, September 16, 2005 address

¹ *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, 7.6.1.resp., ed. R. Spiazzi (Turin: Marietti, 1956), p. 146.

God's Longing

To the listening ear I speak, to the waiting heart I come. Sometimes, I may not speak. I may ask you merely to wait in My Presence, to know that I am with you.

Think of the multitudes, who thronged Me, when I was on earth, all eager for something. Eager to be healed, or taught, or fed.

Think as I supplied their many wants, and granted their manifold requests, what it meant to Me, to find amid the crowd, some one or two, who followed Me just to be near Me, just to dwell in My Presence. How some longing of the Eternal Heart was satisfied thereby.

Comfort Me, awhile, by letting Me know that you would seek Me just to dwell in My Presence, to be near Me, not even for teaching, not for material gain, not even for a message – but for Me. The longing of the human heart to be loved for itself is a something caught from the Great Divine Heart.²

²

A.J. Russell (ed.), *God Calling*, Jove Publications, Inc.: Grand Rapids, MI, 1998.

DLI Retreat Communal Lectio Divina

Select a facilitator from your table to lead the group through the following process. Begin by offering a prayer on behalf of the group, that the Father might come lovingly through the Word to meet us and talk to us as His children.

Lectio Divina

1. First reading. Read the passage slowly, being attentive to any one word or phrase that strikes you from the text.
2. Minute of silent reflection. “What word or phrase is God drawing out of the Scripture for me?”
- 3. Share the word or phrase.**
4. Second Reading. Read the passage again, this time being attentive to any one word or phrase that strikes you.
5. Minute of silent reflection. “What has the Lord said to me in this reading with regard to my life today?”
- 6. Share: “I hear the Lord saying to me. . .”**
7. Third Reading. Read the passage once more, allowing God to elaborate on that word or phrase.
8. Minute of silent reflection. “What does the Lord want me to do today/this week?”
- 9. Sharing: “I believe the Lord wants me to . . .”**

Psalm 27

(1-3)

The Lord is my light and my salvation – Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?
When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh,
when my enemies and my foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.
Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear;
Though war break out against me,
even then will I be confident.

(4-6)

One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.
For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
He will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock.
Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me;
At his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the Lord.

(7-8)

Hear my voice when I call, O Lord;
Be merciful to me and answer me.
My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, Lord, I will seek.

(9-10)

Do not hide your face from me,
Do not turn your servant away in anger;
You have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior.
Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.

(11-12)

Teach me your way, O Lord;
Lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.
Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me, breathing out violence.

(13-14)

I am still confident in this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord;
Be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.

After the third reading and sharing:

1. If members of your group feel comfortable with praying, the facilitator can open up a time of spontaneous prayer, reflecting on the Scripture.
2. Or one person could volunteer to close your sacred reading time with a final prayer on behalf of the group.