

Lectio Divina--Session 6

Reading About Lectio

What we sometimes forget is that this gift of salvation often runs counter to our own perceptions and expectations. The disposition that makes us capable of receiving salvation includes a willingness to be guided and to be changed.

Of our own free choice we entrust ourselves to the book we are reading. We come to it defenseless and ready to be influenced. . . .God's saving of us takes place by dragging us beyond our own comfort zone into new territory and new adventures. . . .This means that we have to stop trying to control the process. We have to take the risk of reading what is before us, allowing it to speak to our hearts and consciences and to cause us to look in a direction we had previously ignored. (p. 6)

from *Sacred Reading* by Michael Casey

Opening Prayer Gracious God, let me be open to your Word, to your Spirit as you seek me and transform me through this reading. Amen.

The moments of Lectio Divina as presented by Mariano Magrassi in *Praying the Bible*

Lectio--Reading

The starting point is reading. With it I get ready to listen: God speaks to me. It is the moment when, as Jerome would say, "I unfurl my sails to the Holy Spirit" in whom I have the joy of hearing the Lord's true voice.

Full hearing requires attentive reading. . . .contemplative calm.

Read the Scripture, slowly, letting the words sink in.

Meditatio--Meditation, Reflection

First, we must create within our heart a flexible space of resonance, so that the Word can penetrate its deepest parts and touch its innermost fibers. This demands the kind of recollection we feel the need for when something great and beautiful appears in our life.

The quiet at the end of a piece of music, or the space that opens up when we see a painting that draws us in, or the gasp of awe when we have read a poem that speaks to where we are in our lives. This kind of reflection, of questioning--what am I attracted by? What is it saying to me? What is it pointing to or illuminating in my life? Read the Scripture again, listening for the call of a word or phrase. Sit with the word or phrase for a few moments, unfurl your defenses and go where the Spirit leads you.

Oratio--Prayer

Meditative reading as we have described it leads spontaneously to prayer. In fact, it is prayer: "Reading too is Prayer." (St. Irenaeus of Marseilles) In any case, the two activities complement each other. They are two moments in the mystical dialogue, harmoniously alternating. The soul leaves it reading to run to God.

Read the Scripture yet again and let yourself run to God--with thanksgiving, with questions, with fear, with awe, in short with all the humanity that needs healing, needs to connect with God's life in us.

Contemplatio--Contemplation, Resting in God

Contemplation is certainly the peak of this entire activity. It is not something superimposed from without but is like a delicious fruit that ripens on the tree of Bible reading. And it is a normal fruit--provided we do not understand the term to mean extraordinary mystical graces. There is, in fact, a form of contemplation available to us all. It is a normal complement of the Christian life taken seriously.

To contemplate means to enter into a relationship of faith and love with the God of truth and life, who has revealed his face to us in Christ. That face is revealed to us on every page of the Bible. All we need to do is look, open ourselves to the light, and desire that it shine in us.

Scripture-- Matthew 4: 12-17, 23-25

Read, Meditate, Pray, Rest/Contemplate

Then take the fruits of this time into the rest of your life. Perhaps take a word or phrase with you to be an active prayer sentence and recall you to the presence of God as you move through your day. Perhaps take a resolution to reread this passage before bed at night, that you may expand what you've learned from God today. Perhaps share with a spiritual friend what you have found in today's reading.

Concluding Prayer

Good and gracious God, you are in the words of the Scripture, in the life and teaching of the Word, your son Jesus, and in my heart as I share your Divine life. Thank you for the Words of Life. Let me be love as you are love.

We hope that these six sessions have given you a taste of Lectio's richness and the support you need to continue this practice in your own life. Below you will find a list of resources to help you as you continue in your Holy Reading.

Resources

Selected Bibliography For Lectio Divina

Arico, Carl. A Taste of Silence (Ch. 5), New York: Continuum, 1997.

Within the context of presenting the fundamentals of Centering Prayer, Fr. Arico devotes Chapter 5 in his book to the method of Lectio Divina. Arico has a special gift to teach the essentials in a clear and concise way, flavored with a touch of humor.

Bianchi, Enzo, Praying the Word, Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1998

To make the Word become prayer is the focus of this small but excellent work. "I will try to present Lectio Divina, the prayerful reading of the Word of God, in a way I make bold to call 'Trinitarian', because as Christians our prayer and lives are Trinitarian".

Bianchi's work makes the patristic way of reading Scripture not only intelligible but most attractive. An excellent summary of *lectio's* historical and theological background is clearly presented. Chapter 5 "Formation for *Lectio Divina*" and all of part II "Guidelines for Lectio Divina" will be helpful to those who pray and those who teach *Lectio Divina*

Binz, Stephen J., Conversing with God in Scripture: A Contemporary Approach to Lectio Divina, The Word Among Us Press, 2008.

A Catholic biblical scholar, popular speaker, and author of more than twenty books on the Bible, Stephen J. Binz has combined his scholarship and his work with small groups to write a practical guide to Lectio Divina that is designed for both the beginner and the seasoned practitioner. He begins with a foundation of the essential characteristics of and necessary dispositions for Lectio Divina, then develops its centeredness in Christ, followed by a detailed presentation of each of the moments and practical

suggestions for personal practice. Each chapter concludes with questions for reflection and discussion for individual and group study.

Casey, Michael, Sacred Reading Liguori, Missouri: Liguori/Triumph, 1995.

A book of instruction on the ancient practice of Lectio Divina, Sacred Reading offers a bold and engaging consideration of this method of prayer. Casey shares many of his insights that come from his faithful practice of this way of praying.

Dumm, Demetrius, Flowers in the Desert, A Spirituality of the Bible, New York: Paulist Press, 1987.

Not just knowing the Bible, but living it is one of the fruits of Lectio Divina. **Flowers in the Desert** provides a fresh approach to praying with the Scriptures by focusing not just on God's call to humanity in general, but on the personal call of God to each of us in our particular current circumstances. This book is excellent background reading for those less familiar with the Hebrew and Christian scriptures

Hall, Thelma, Too Deep for Words, New York: Paulist Press, 1988.

This book is an excellent Lectio Divina text for beginners and at the same time a wonderfully insightful and refreshing approach for those experienced in Lectio Divina. Hall draws from Merton and St John of the Cross and other spiritual masters but never loses sight of the fundamental essence of Lectio as a developing love relationship with God. It is a short book (56 pages), but a fully satisfying and delightful treat, something to return to time and again. There is an added bonus at the end of the book of 500 scriptural texts organized under themes such as anxiety, compassion, false self, true self.

Keating, Thomas, Intimacy with God (Ch. 5), New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994.

Keating's talk on Lectio Divina (Ch.5) is a concise explanation of this method of prayer. He also give a clear explanation of the "four senses" of scripture and how they begin to unfold as a dynamic within one's own life.

_____ , The Ancient Monastic Practice of Lectio Divina, Contemplative Outreach News, Vol. 12, Number 2: Winter, 1998.

This short two-page essay briefly explains what Lectio is and what it is not. It describes the difference between Scholastic and Monastic methods of Lectio and it touches on the relationship between Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina. In a few paragraphs it also effectively explains the theological basis for the process of Lectio. It is a very dense two-page document that can be used as a reference over and over again.

Magrassi, Mariano, Praying the Bible, an Introduction to Lectio Divina, Collegeville:Liturgical Press, 1998

Responding to the admonition of Vatican II and the 1985 synod of bishops, Archbishop Magrassi writes to urge every Christian to recover the Bible. Drawing upon the Church Fathers with copious citations (the quotes from the Fathers alone

make this volume an outstanding resource), Magrassi demonstrates how the practice of Lectio is the practice that will recover the Bible for every Christian and the Church. With great insight Magrassi reveals the synergy between private Lectio and corporate worship. The volume carefully lays the theological and spiritual foundations for Lectio. The first two moments of scholastic Lectio are excellently treated. The third moment is adequately described, but the movement into *contemplatio* seems a little haphazard. The treatment of *collatio* ("conference" or group *lectio*) is a bit muddled and too brief. Nonetheless, it points to the profound dynamic of group Lectio that is lacking in most books on Lectio Divina.

Masini, Mario, An Ancient Prayer that is ever new: Lectio Divina, New York, New York:Alba House, 1998.

This volume deals with the same issues and from the same perspective as Magrassi's *Praying the Bible* (see above). One could almost call it an abbreviated and less academic version of Magrassi. Nonetheless, Masini offers some additional insights that enhance and expand the teaching. This is especially true with his treatment of *collatio*.

Mulholland, Jr. M. Robert, Shaped by the Word, Revised Edition, Nashville, TN: TheUpper Room Books, 2000.

Reflecting on the scriptures can be a transforming grace. Mulholland clearly describes both the informational and formational approach to scripture and clarifies how there needs to be an interplay and balance between the two if spiritual formation is to take place. Being shaped by the Word is a process that culminates in our becoming the

“word” God created us to be. This book is an excellent resource for anyone who regularly practices Lectio Divina

Painter, Christine Valters, and Lucy Wynkoop, OSB. Lectio Divina: Contemplative Awakening and Awareness. New York: Paulist Press, 2008.

When a Benedictine nun (Lucy Wynkoop of St. Placid Priory) and a Benedictine Oblate (Christine Painter of the same Priory) write together about Lectio Divina, you can be sure the advice will be solid and life changing. Their book describes the four moments of monastic Lectio Divina in suitable detail. But their strong suit is the inspirational yet practical advice for actually doing Lectio. In addition, they apply those four moments to other pursuits, including art, music, and film. In essence, they see the rhythms of Lectio as being the rhythms of a contemplative life. Their book explores the transforming effects of both those rhythms and immersion in the Word.

Pennington, Basil, Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice of Praying the Scriptures, New York: The Crosswords Press, 1998.

An informative and practical guidebook for today’s Christian describing the time tested method of praying with the Scriptures. Fr. Basil defines Lectio Divina as the art of letting God, our Divine Friend, speak to us through his inspired Word. He speaks also of Lectio Divina being our response to the Word received. It is a way of dialoging with God.

From Contemplative Outreach Ltd.;

http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_practices_lectio

Online Course

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/ecourses/ecourses.php?id=45&key=co>

Back to Centering Resources

http://www.saintandrew.org/v4/centering_prayer_resources/