



LECTIO DIVINIA

The Lectio Divina is used in this mediation.

Overview

Introduction to Lectio Divina – a way of praying with Scripture.

Scripture

Mark 4:35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Quotations

Idleness is the enemy of the soul. For this reason the brethren should be occupied at certain times in manual labor, and at other times in sacred reading (lectio divina)

— *St. Benedict of Nursia*

Is not every page of the Old or New Testament, every word of the Divine Author, a most direct rule for our human life? Does not

every book of the Catholic Fathers proclaim that we should make our way by the most direct path to our Creator? Whoever you, then, who are hurrying forward to your evenly fatherland, do you with Christ's help fulfill this little Rule written for beginners; and then you will come at the end, under God's protection, to those heights of learning and virtue which we have mentioned above. Amen.

— *St. Benedict of Nursia*

Introducing the Practice

Lectio divina is an ancient method of praying with Scripture. The words "lectio divina" literally mean "divine reading" in Latin. Though we read scripture very often and in different settings, lectio divina is a way to slow down our reading in order to engage the text in a deeper way. This practice can be done with any passage from scripture. While similar methods of praying with scripture existed earlier in Christian history, lectio divina became established as a regular monastic practice in the 6th century.

Saint Benedict of Nursia (480-547) is often called the founder of Western monasticism. Before St. Benedict's time, smaller monastic communities existed in different expressions throughout Eastern and Western Christendom. St. Benedict, however, established a number of monastic communities who all followed a unified way of living and operating. The Rule of Saint Benedict gave spiritual guidance and organizational structure to monastic communities with the general lifestyle defined by prayer and work. This Rule is still followed by monasteries today. Within the daily schedule prescribed in the Rule, St. Benedict established time for lectio divina. Since the 6th century, monks and nuns have been practicing lectio divina as part of their daily schedule, and thousands of other non-monastics have used lectio divina as a method of praying with scripture.

Preparing for the Practice

Have everyone spread out to find a comfortable place to sit where they can still hear the voice of the person guiding the practice.

The Spiritual Practice

Find a place to sit in silence, closing your eyes, quieting your mind, and centering your heart. Call upon the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind to the holy wisdom of the Scriptures in this time.

1) The first reading is a chance to become acquainted with – or reacquainted with – the passage at this moment in your life. Attentively receive the words of Mark’s Gospel. Listen for a particular word or phrase that jumps out at you in this moment. Do not force anything, but let the Spirit guide you to the specific part of this psalm that you need to hear right now.

Read Mark 4:35-41 out loud.

(3-5 min of silence)

2) Listen again to the words of the Gospel, paying particular attention to whatever word or phrase initially stuck out to you.

Read Mark 4:35-41 out loud.

Now reflect upon the word or phrase that stuck out to you. Do not analyze it, but consider why it might have stuck out to you in this moment. What meaning might it hold for you, or why might God be saying to you through it?

(3-5 min of silence)

3) Hear again the words of the Gospel.

Read Mark 4:35-41 out loud.

Now you are invited to respond to the reading. What is your response to the particular word or phrase that stuck out to you? What thoughts or questions does it raise for you? What does it make you want to say to God?

(3-5 min of silence)

4) Now hear the words of Mark’s Gospel one final time. As you hear the passage for the final time, let any questions or thoughts you have about the passage quiet down. This is your time to simply rest in the words of scripture without having to think or respond. Simply sit quietly and let God complete whatever work has already begun in you.

Read Mark 4:35-41 out loud.

(5-10 min of silence)

Discussion Questions

1. What word or phrase stuck out to you?
2. What insight did you receive from this meditation?
3. How is this way of reading scripture different than the other ways we read scripture?