

Meditating with the Word of God

By Fr. Randy Soto, SThD

Lectio Divina is the oldest method of prayer with the Word of God in our Catholic Tradition. It began when monastic life started at the end of the second century, and since, it has been perfected and systematized in order to help us in our meditation of Sacred Scripture. There are three steps to *Lectio Divina*:

1. Step I. We begin by calling on the Holy Spirit, asking for his assistance.

2. Step II. We read in the Gospel of Saint Luke: «*Ask*, and it shall *Be Given* to you; *Seek*, and you shall *Find*; *Knock* and it shall be *Opened* to you» (Lk 11:9). In this text, Our Lord Jesus Christ gives us the key to understand this second step of *Lectio Divina*: each of the highlighted verbs correspond to one of the four movements of this step.

a) **The First Movement is called *Lectio***, which is to read the Sacred Text. Using our intellect we *Seek* for the objective meaning of the Text. We look for the characters (who?); events (which?); circumstances (when? where? why?); and finally the teaching (what does it say?).

b) **The Second Movement is called *Meditatio***, which is to meditate the Sacred Text. Using our hearts we *Find* what is the text saying to us here and now? We digest or assimilate the text (what is it saying to me?). Then, we associate the text to my life (how do I feel about it?); finally, if possible, we correlate the text with other readings, documents, or commentaries from the Fathers of the Church (does it ring any bell?).

c) **The Third Movement is called *Oratio***, which is to pray with the Sacred Text. Using our whole being we *Knock* by engaging in conversation with God through prayer: first, we recognize with humility God's greatness; then, we implore to receive the virtues discovered in the text (what shall I do?); we ask for His mercy towards us; we thank Him in advance for the many blessings we shall receive for we trust that our petitions be received and granted.

d) **The Fourth Movement is called *Contemplatio***, which is the passive act of contemplation. Using nothing, we let the Lord *Open* to us, for he has said: "it shall *Be Given* to you." The Lord shall give us, though not always, through the power of His Word whatever he wishes to give us. These gifts are not necessarily the same thing every time so we must learn how to receive the plethoric variety of his gifts. We contemplate the life of Jesus and the mystery of His love; we comprehend that our lives are a part of His plan and that despite our faults and sins, He still loves us; finally, we taste and enjoy the beauty of His gifts and the healing power of His mercy.

e) **The Fifth Movement is called *Actio***, which is the active resolution of the will to do something about what the Lord has asked me to do, and for which we prayed and contemplated. It needs to be planned, carried out and evaluated with a peer or Spiritual Director.

3. Step III. We conclude our *Lectio* by offering a prayer to God in thanksgiving for all gifts received.

Prayers to the Holy Spirit

O Holy Spirit, You are the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. You are the Spirit of truth, love and holiness, proceeding from the Father and the Son, and equal to Them in all things. I adore You and love You with all my heart. Teach me to know and to seek God, by whom and for whom I was created. Fill my heart with a holy fear and a great love for Him. Give me compunction and patience, and do not let me fall into sin.

Increase faith, hope, and charity in me and bring forth in me all the virtues proper to my state of life. Help me to grow in the four cardinal virtues, Your seven gifts, and Your twelve fruits.

Make me a faithful follower of Jesus, an obedient child of the Church, and a help to my neighbor. Give me the grace to keep the commandments and to receive the sacraments worthily. Raise me to holiness in the state of life to which You have called me, and lead me through a happy death to everlasting life. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Grant me also, O Holy Spirit, Giver of all good gifts, the special favor for which I ask [*name the favor here*], if it be for Your honor and glory and for my well being. Amen.

Open Mind Open Heart

The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel

Prayer to the Holy Spirit Inspired by the Latin hymn *Veni Sancti Spiritus*

By Father Thomas Keating

Come, Holy Spirit, pour out of the depths of the Trinity a ray of Your Light--that Light which enlightens our minds and, at the same time, strengthens our wills to pursue the Light.

Come, Father of the poor, the poor in spirit, whom You love to fill with the fullness of God.

You are not only Giver of gifts, but Giver of Yourself, the supreme Gift--*the* Gift of the Father and the Son. You are the best consoler! What a charming Guest You make! Your conversation, though all in silence, is sweetness itself. How refreshing Your consolation! Soothing like a caress. In an instant You dissipate all doubt and sadness.

In the labor of fighting temptation, you are there promising victory. Your presence is our victory. You gently coax our timid hearts to trust in You.

In the greatest of labors, the struggle of self-surrender, You are our repose--our peace in the depth of our souls.

In the heat of battle; Your breath is cooling, calming our rebellious passions, quieting our fears when it looks like defeat. You dry our tears when we fall. It is You who give the grace of compunction and the sure hope of pardon.

Oh deliriously happy Light! Fill to the uttermost recesses the hearts of Your faithful children!

Without You, there is no divine life in us, no virtue at all. If Your breath is cut off, our spirit perishes; nor can it live again until You press Your lips to our mouths and breathe into them the breath of life.

Your touch is as dew, but You act with a strong hand. Gentle as the softest breeze, You are also in the whirlwind. Like a giant furnace blast, You dry up all our faculties--but only to melt the hardness of our hearts. You cast us before You like dead leaves in the winter's gale--but only to set our feet upon the narrow way. Now, as a mighty Wind coming, pour down torrents to wash away our sins. Drench with grace our dried out hearts. Soothe the wounds You have cauterized. Give to all who trust in You--with that true trust which only You can give--Your seven sacred Gifts. Grant the reward of virtue; that is, Your very Self! Grant to the end! And then, everlasting joy! Amen