



## The Practice of Lectio Divina

The contemplative mind does not need to prove anything or disprove anything. It's what the Benedictines called a *Lectio Divina*, a reading of the Scripture that looks for wisdom instead of quick answers. It first says, "What does this text ask of *me*? *How can I* change because of this story?" And not "How can I use this to prove that I am right and others are wrong or sinful?"

The contemplative mind is willing to hear from a beginner's mind, yet also learn from Scripture, Tradition—and others. It has the humility to move toward Yes/And thinking and not all-or-nothing thinking. It leads to a "Third Way," which is neither fight nor flight, but standing in between—where I can *hold what I do know together with what I don't know*. Holding such a creative tension with humility and patience leads us to wisdom instead of easy answers which largely create opinionated and smug people instead of wise people. We surely need wise people now, who hold their truth humbly and patiently.

Adapted from the webcast *What is the Emerging Church?*

### The Practice of Lectio Divina:

The following guidelines for Lectio Divina are from the devotional book called Solo. The devotional content is by Jan Johnson, J.R. Briggs, and Katie Peckham. The translation of the Bible used in Solo is by Eugene H. Peterson, called 'The Message.' The following is from pages 1-3 of the Introduction.

Select a short passage from Scripture - or from any spiritual source. Then...

1. **Read:** thoughtfully, leisurely, faithfully - it is an epic love story, you are in it, God is in it. "Knowing facts about God doesn't change your relationship with him, so take the time to splash around in the Word, to absorb it, to discover what God has to say to you each day."
2. **Think:** One word may speak today and another tomorrow; listen; don't worry about interpretation; what others have said. "This is about what God has to say to you."
3. **Pray:** God wants dialogue with us; listen as well as speak; ask our God when you come across something you don't understand. "Don't worry if no lightning strikes or brilliant revelations come. Sometimes devotion means just sitting in the presence of God."
4. **Live:** Don't miss the point; God's Word will change you; God-acts.

Prepared by Cheryl Austin for Adult Spiritual Formation Program, August 2018

From Center for Action and Contemplation Founder Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM's Daily Mediation for Saturday January 9, 2016.

*Lectio divina* is a contemplative way to read short passages of sacred text. With the first reading, *listen* with your heart's ear for a phrase or word that stands out for you. During the second reading, *reflect* on what touches you, perhaps speaking that response aloud or writing in a journal. After reading the passage a third time, *respond* with a prayer or expression of what you have experienced and what it calls you to. Finally, *rest* in silence after a fourth reading.

I invite you to practice *lectio divina* with this ancient love song:

<p>LOVER: My dove is my only one, perfect and mine. She is the darling of her mother, the favourite of the one who bore her. Girls have seen her and proclaimed her blessed, queens and concubines have sung her praises, “Who is this arising like the dawn, fair as the moon, resplendent as the sun, formidable as an army?”</p> <p>I went down to the nut orchard to see the fresh shoots in the valley, to see if the vines were budding and the pomegranate trees in flower. Before I knew . . . my desire had hurled me onto the chariots of Amminadib!</p>	<p>BELOVED: [Y]our palate [is] like sweet wine [f]lowing down the throat of my love, as it runs on the lips of those who sleep. I belong to my love, and his desire is for me.</p> <p>Come, my love, let us go to the fields. We will spend the night in the villages, and in the early morning we will go to the vineyards. We will see if the vines are budding, if their blossoms are opening, if the pomegranate trees are in flower. Then I shall give you the gift of my love. The mandrakes yield their fragrance, the most exquisite fruits are at our doors; the new as well as the old, I have stored them for you, my love.</p> <p>Set me like a seal on your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is strong as Death, passion as relentless as Sheol. The flash of it is a flash of fire, a flame of YHWH himself. Love no flood can quench, no torrents drown.</p>
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—Song of Songs 6:9-12, 7:10-14, 8:6-7 (New Jerusalem Bible)