

Prayer

the Center and

Centrifuge of Life

Prayer is at the heart of Christian Spirituality. It is the life blood of faith without which our souls perish. But prayer is about far more than our own souls. Prayer which is centered, and is the center of our faith - becomes a natural catapult, sending us out of centered communion with God and into serious communion with God's world.

Within the Benedictine practice of prayer there are specific areas of emphasis which offer peculiar opportunities for newness and vitality in life.

Whenever we want to ask some favor of a powerful person, we do it humbly and respectfully, for fear of presumption. How much more important, then, to lay our petitions before the God of all things with the utmost humility and sincere devotion. We must know that God regards our purity and heart and tears of compunction, not our many words. Prayer should, therefore, be short and pure, unless perhaps it is prolonged under the inspiration of divine grace.

Rule of Saint Benedict 20:1-4

As the quote above suggests, prayer in this tradition is to be simple and succinct. The commitment to the values of simplicity and brevity in speech before God — coupled with an equal devotion and reverence for the Word of God in scripture has produced *Lectio Divina* - or 'sacred reading.' Below you will be given a basic pattern to follow which I hope you will learn to use often. Choose a Psalm or a gospel passage or some treasured part of the Epistles and give *Lectio Divina* a try.

Lectio Divina

Sacred Reading

The practice of reading scripture using this method is ancient and has been widely used by Christians for many centuries.

This prayerful engagement with scripture has much to commend it:

- 1) It engages both ‘sides’ of the brain by asking us to both *read and think* and also to *relax* in the presence of God’s Word to us.
- 2) Simplicity of the four step movement.
- 3) It can be practiced alone or as a group.
- 4) Practitioners have noticed a pattern of intensification within the practice which they have equated with the growth of significant relationships.

RELATIONSHIP	LECTIO	PRAYER IS FROM....
Acquaintance	Read	Lips
Friendliness	Reflect	Mind
Friendship	Respond	Heart
Union of Life	Rest	Whole Self

Lectio Divina

***Lectio* (Read) [read scripture passage twice]**

Silence 3-5 minutes - silently repeat a word or phrase that interests you...*

Sharing aloud (if in group): Simply share the word or phrase that spoke to you. No elaboration.

***Meditatio* (Reflect) [read once]**

Silence 3-5 minutes - reflecting on "Where does this scripture touch my life?"

Sharing aloud: "I hear, I see, I was struck by..."

***Oratio* (Respond) [read once]**

Silence 3-5 minutes - reflecting on "How is God calling me to Respond? What is asked of me today?"

Sharing aloud: Briefly pray - spontaneously expressing your response to God's call.

***Contemplatio* (Rest) [read once]**

Rest in the Word, in silence 2-3 minutes

** time allotted for each period of silence can vary.*

Bibliography

Pennington, Basil *Lectio Divina: renewing the ancient practice of praying the scriptures*

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Casey, Michael *Sacred Reading: the ancient art of Lectio Divina*

(Ligouri-Triumph: England, 1996) [978-0892438914]