**Lectio Divina (Divine Bible Reading)**

In Christianity, Lectio Divina (Latin for "Divine Reading") is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's word. It does not treat scripture as texts to be studied, but as the living word.

Traditionally, Lectio Divina has four separate steps Lectio, Meditatio, Oratio, Contemplatio: Or read; meditate; pray; contemplate. First a passage of scripture is read, then its meaning is reflected upon. This is followed by prayer and contemplation on the Word of God

The focus of Lectio Divina is not a theological analysis of biblical passages but viewing them with Christ as the key to their meaning.

For example, given Jesus' statement in John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you", an analytical approach would focus on the reason for the statement during the Last Supper, the biblical context, etc. In Lectio Divina, however, the practitioner "enters" and shares the peace of Christ rather than "dissecting" it.

The roots of scriptural reflection and interpretation go back to Origen in the 3rd century, after whom Ambrose taught them to Augustine of Hippo.

**Lectio ("read")**

The first step is the reading of Scripture. In order to achieve a calm and tranquil state of mind, preparation before Lectio Divina is recommended.

The biblical basis for the preparation goes back to 1 Corinthians 2:9–10 which emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in revealing the Word of God.

As in the statement by John the Baptist in John 1:26 that "Christ stands in the midst of those who seek him", the preparatory step should open the mind to finding Christ in the passage being read.

Following the preparation the first movement of Lectio Divina is slow and gradual reading of the scriptural passage, perhaps several times. The biblical basis for the reading goes back to Romans 10:8–10 and the presence of God's word in the believer's "mouth or heart.”

The attentive reading begins the process through which a higher level of understanding can be achieved. In the traditional Benedictine approach the passage is slowly read four times, each time with a slightly different focus.

**Meditatio ("meditate")**

Although Lectio Divina involves reading, it is less a practice of reading than one of listening to the inner message of the Scripture delivered through the Holy Spirit. Lectio Divina does not seek information or motivation, but communion with God. It does not treat Scripture as text to be studied, but as the "Living Word.”

The second movement in Lectio Divina thus involves meditating upon and pondering on the scriptural passage. When the passage is read, it is generally advised not to try to assign a meaning to it at first, but to wait for the action of the Holy Spirit to illuminate the mind, as the passage is pondered upon.

The English word ponder comes from the Latin ‘pondus’ which relates to the mental activity of weighing or considering. To ponder on the passage that has been read, it is held lightly and gently considered from various angles. Again, the emphasis is not on analysis of the passage but to keep the mind open and allow the Holy Spirit to inspire a meaning for it.

An example passage may be the statement by Jesus during the Last Supper in John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you."

An analytical approach would focus on why Jesus said that, the fact that it was said at the Last Supper, and the context within the biblical episode. Other theological analysis may follow, e.g. the cost at which Jesus the Lamb of God provided peace through his obedience to the will of Father, etc.

However, these theological analyses are generally avoided in Lectio Divina, where the focus is on Christ as the key that interprets the passage and relates it to the meditator. So rather than "dissecting peace" in an analytical manner, the practitioner of Lectio Divina "enters peace" and shares the peace of Christ. The focus will thus be on achieving peace via a closer communion with God rather than a biblical analysis of the passage. Similar other passages may be "Abide in my love", "I am the Good Shepherd", etc.

**Oratio ("pray")**

In the Christian tradition, prayer is understood as dialogue with God, that is, as loving conversation with God who has invited us into an embrace. The constitution Dei verbum which endorsed Lectio Divina for the general public, as well as in monastic settings, quoted Saint Ambrose on the importance of prayer in conjunction with Scripture reading.

**Contemplatio ("contemplate")**

Contemplation takes place in terms of silent prayer that expresses love for God.

The role of the Holy Spirit in contemplative prayer has been emphasized by Christian spiritual writers for centuries. In the 12th century, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux compared the Holy Spirit to a kiss by the Eternal Father which allows the practitioner of contemplative prayer to experience union with God.

In the 14th century, Richard Rolle viewed contemplation as the path that leads the soul to union with God in love, and considered the Holy Spirit as the center of contemplation.

From a theological perspective, God's grace is considered a principle, or cause, of contemplation, with its benefits delivered through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

**THE FEEDING METAPHOR**

The Bible is replete with examples of meals and feasting. From Passover to the Feast of Tabernacles, all seven of the Jewish festivals have meals connected to scriptural significance. One of the ways to think about reading, memorizing scripture is as a meal. We want your child to eat regularly, a scripture with every meal and a meal with every scripture. When appropriate it will be time for the parent to prepare to give the child a charge to “read the word” much like we as a movement charge pastors to “preach the word.”

1. Feed regularly on the Scriptures.

2. Taste the Scriptures by reading. This is the first bite. This is a remind to taste and see that the Lord is good. Encourage them to try the scriptures with different combinations. This will give them different flavors, combinations, and experiences.

3. Pray the scripture. Just as we pause and take time between each bite. The child should be encouraged to pray out the scriptures over their own lives. Pray that they may fulfill them, pray that they may be forgiven when their life is measured by them.

4. Next is the idea of savoring a passage through deeper study and memorization and meditation.

5. Consume the Scriptures. Memorize them. Eat the scrolls of wisdom as Ezekiel and find that they are like honey as described in the book of Revelation.

6. Finally digest the Scriptures and make them part of your body. Let them become part of you both in thought and in action.

**Examples/Practice:**

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Romans 8:32

Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day. Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off. Proverbs 23:17-18

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:31-33

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. John 10:27-29

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. Isaiah 43:2

Hope this is helpful to your devotion.

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