

## Lectio Divina: A brief history

Latin for Divine Lectionary or Sacred Reading.

Lectio Divina is a very old method of reflection on scripture, which finds its roots in the desert movement in early Christianity. The desert fathers and mothers were a strong movement in the first four centuries of Christianity. The desert is the place where Jesus went after his baptism. It is the place where God was found and a relationship with God built in many other instances in scripture. These desert fathers and mothers lived alone or in small groups, gradually clustering in monasteries; moving from living alone- to living alone together- to sharing a communal life. They were always lively in their interaction with the larger faith community who came to seek their wisdom or simply meet with them.

Towards the end of this period, Saint Benedict founded the Benedictine movement, the first communal group which had a rule laid down for communal living. Silence and the reading and contemplation of scripture, Lectio divina, are important parts of that rule. Lectio enables those who practice it to focus their life on God and what we know of God through scripture.

Currently, across denominations, there is a strong 'back to the roots' movement in reaction to the cerebral and activist spirituality of the last century. People are again seeking to reconnect to a more personal and intuitive spirituality, especially in protestant denominations. One manifestation of this movement was the broadcasting of the television series about a Benedictine monastery in Britain, which evoked an enormous response and renewed interest in Lectio divina.

When we look at a story in the bible , we often just regard it as an event or parable, written thousands of years ago to relay a message or teaching. There is an objective meaning intended by the author or a literal salvation orientated meaning.. However, the reading and contemplation on a passage of scripture can invite us **into** the story, and we can discover more of what God may be saying to us personally. There is an intimate personal meaning, a spiritual sense that applies the text to us. We believe that God is very near to us, even if at times we don't feel it. The spirit of God is within us, as we are within God. As it says in Acts: It is God " in whom we live and move and have our being."

Lectio divina can help us get in touch with this very present God who relates to us in our own personal journey. (Practicing the presence of God can be sustained by the Word of God.)

### Steps for Lectio divina:

#### 1<sup>st</sup> reading:

Ponder over the word or phrase that is standing out for you.

What's your heart's invitation that you want to speak out to God?

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> reading:

**Meditation:** You may find you can put yourself in the story, using your imagination or you may allow God's word or words to repeat over and over again to penetrate more deeply into your heart.

What feeling or experience does it leave you with?

### **3<sup>rd</sup> reading:**

**Prayer:** Having got in touch with where you are in your prayer, what's your deep response? What do you want to say to God?

**Contemplation:** Having spoken out in your heart to God, sit and wait. You are allowing God to take over more and more as you allow yourself to linger in God's loving presence.

#### **Prayer:**

May today there be peace within.

May you trust that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing you are a child of God.

Let this presence settle into you bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.

Loving God, let our existence be ruled by a great silence.

Let our souls be listening.

Let our souls be given to the needs of others.

Let us be silent in our inner most being, not asserting ourselves.

Let our souls be detached, not grasping at anything in this world. And thus may we overcome in our lives the power of habit, daily routine, dullness fatigue and fear.

Let us create within ourselves a carefree tranquility, a place for every encounter, unreserved receptivity and unhurried disposition.

Extinguish in us the feelings of self importance and the last stirrings of our ego and make us gentle.

Motivate us to answer thoughts and situations rather than works.

We articulate these thoughts to you our God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who was and is our profound and gracious example of what God is like for us as Christians.

Amen

– Margaret Loftus