

Sacred Reading

Ever since I was a child, I've loved reading. I read for all sorts of different reasons. I read to get information. Sometimes I read to learn new material. And I also like to read to be entertained. I've learned that I can also let my love of reading draw me closer to God.

Today, let's look at the spiritual discipline of sacred reading or as it is also called, Lectio Divina.



The type of reading that sacred reading emphasizes is not to entertain or even to learn.

It's for an entirely different purpose, one that is explained in this quote by Thomas `a Kempis. *"Do not read to satisfy curiosity or to pass the time, but study such things as move your heart to devotion."*

Now I don't think there's anything wrong with the other types of reading; they all have their place, but the purpose of sacred reading is to draw our hearts to our Lord. **The idea is to come to this reading of a passage of scripture with no other agenda but than to hear what God wants to say to you.** This is known as a meditative or devotional reading of the Bible that St. Benedict popularized as part of the Benedictine monks daily routine. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is living and powerful, so we can assume that through His word God can shape us, mold us and change our lives. That's

what we hope to see through Lectio Divina.

Choosing a Scripture

When undertaking this type of devotional reading, you'll want to choose a fairly short (4 to 8 verses) portion of scripture. The Psalms are a wonderful place to start, as are any of the Gospels and Ecclesiastes. To begin, you'll want your Bible and a notebook to record your thoughts in. You'll need to find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Start by quieting yourself and praying that God will bless this time with Him, and that you'll hear what He wants to say to you.

Four Steps of Lectio Divina

1. **Read (lectio)**. Read your portion of scripture listening for the word or phrase that seems to jump out to you. You can write this in your journal if you'd like.

2. **Reflect (meditatio)**. Read the same portion of scripture again and reflect on why you are touched by this word or phrase. Ask yourself, "What is going on in my life that caused those words to jump out to me?" or "Where do I see myself in this passage?" You may also record this in your journal if you'd like to.

3. **Respond (oratio)**. Read the passage a third time. Ask yourself "How does God want me to respond to this?" You may pray something back to God. You may be convicted of a sin. You may be called to do something. Again you can journal your response if you'd like to.

4. **Rest (contemplate)**. Read the passage the final time and then just rest in what you have learned and enjoy being in God's presence. Resolve to carry this word with you throughout your day.

This is a simple but powerful way for God to change us and mold us into the people He wants us to be. One thing I've

started doing lately is writing on a sticky note what it is that God has shown me that day, as well as writing it in my journal. You see, I resolved to carry it through my day, but I found that all too soon I forgot what it was God had shown me! By writing it on a sticky note, I can take it with me through my day and look at it repeatedly.

Feel free to share in the comments below if you've ever tried this spiritual discipline or if you plan on trying it. You can also share something God has shown you in your time of Lectio Divina if you'd like.

Pray on!

Jane