

The Way of *Lectio* • Luke Dysinger OSB

In *lectio divina* Christ comes to meet us. He comes to open our eyes and ears. He comes, to awaken our hearts. He comes to bring us to life. He comes gently and yet with a thousand surprises. He comes to console us, and sometimes to challenge us. He comes to call us and teach us, to show us who we really are—what we're like, and what we can be. He comes to heal us, to bind our wounds, and to clean our sores.

In *lectio* Christ comes to us in the word: Jesus speaks to us so that we might hear ourselves, and, in hearing ourselves, hear the One who speaks within us in the silence of our hearts. In *lectio* Christ touches us, kisses us, and breathes into us the breath of life itself. The Word is the Kiss of Christ, the taste of life without end.

The following brief guide to *lectio divina* comes—by way of *Give Us this Day**—from Father Luke Dysinger OSB, a monk of Saint Andrews Abbey, Valyermo (California). Luke has been teaching *lectio* for a long time, and this brief guide is the fruit of his experience and faith. It flows from his love of the Word and from his knowledge of how the Scriptures were the bread of life for Christians in the early centuries of the Church.

The three moments of *lectio* are known by various names. Some call them, “reading, reflecting, responding,” others call them, “bearing, happening, hoping.” Traditionally they have been known as *lectio, meditatio, oratio*. Father Luke calls them “reading, pondering, praying.” Whatever we call them the reality is the same. “O that today you would listen to his voice, harden not your hearts!” (Psalm 94)

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Read. Turn to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savour each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the “still, small voice” of a word or phrase that somehow says, “I am for you today.” Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. God is teaching us to listen, to seek him in silence. God does not reach out and grab us but gently invites us ever more deeply into his presence.

Ponder. Take the word or phrase that strikes or touches you: bring it into yourself, into the quiet of your heart. Memorise it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories, and ideas. Do not be afraid of distractions. Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself that, when they rise up during *lectio divina*, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

Pray. Whether you use words, ideas, or images—or all three—is not important. Engage with God as you would with one who you know accepts you, who loves you. Approach your heavenly Father, as you would want your child to approach you. Give to God what you have discovered during your experience of pondering. Give to God what you have found within your heart. That is a true gift that only you can give.

Remember. we are not ‘performing’ or seeking some goal. Only strangers perform for each other. People who learn to love, have learned to be with the other. Praying God’s word has no goal other than that of being in the presence of the Lord by praying the Scriptures.

**Give Us this Day*, a publication of St John’s Abbey, Collegeville, is a resource for personal and liturgical prayer. See www.GiveUsThisDay.org for more information and a free sample subscription.

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