

Lectio Divina

Part 1 – Introduction

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As we begin, there is first a need to point out that we are embodied spirit. We have physical needs and spiritual needs: the need for food, the need for shelter and clothing, our various emotional and psychological needs, our need to love and be loved, and the other needs of our spirit, our spiritual needs. Our needs need to be met, else we suffer (perhaps even die) — as, for example, if our need for food is not met, we starve and our body begins to waste away. Similarly, if our spiritual needs are not, then we starve spiritually and our spirit starts to waste away. So, then, as part of our spiritual diet, we need to pray, especially those of us who are single.

Lectio divina is an ancient tradition — coming ultimately out of our Jewish heritage, which had a love for and celebration of the written Word of God. “*Lectio divina*” means “spiritual reading”, but it is more than just a mere perusal of spiritual books. It is a reading that seeks not information or even spiritual knowledge. *Lectio*, as it is more usually called, is about a relationship with God. Through our reading we seek to meet the God within, between, behind the lines. Our Jewish forebears in the faith had the notion that, when they heard the Ten Commandments being read out, they were having the same experience as those gathered there on Mount Sinai, that they were therefore in some way present there with them on the Mount, hearing what they heard and adding their “Yes!” to the assent given to the Covenant with God, that they were one with all of God’s People.

This notion was extended to whole of God’s Word, as found in Scripture, so that to hear Scripture being read out was to experience God speaking. It is this that our ancient tradition of *Lectio divina* seeks to

hang onto. *Lectio*, then, is more to do with listening than about reading as such. And our listening is our way of entering the Presence to hear. To the extent that we hear the Lord in his Word, receive it into our being, we participate in God. This demands a certain level of faith: we have to believe it is God's word we encounter, believe that God is present in his word, and believe that this God wants to speak to me; we have to believe it is God who speaks when we hear.