

Lectio Divina
Part 2 – *Lectio* and Discipleship

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For us Christians, Jesus is the Word. He is the revelation of God made manifest; He is God's Word to us incarnate, in the flesh. This Christ is God's Word, the Word to which we must listen. The relationship we seek with God in and through Scripture, then, becomes for us, first and foremost, a relationship with Christ. But it is not just any relationship. It is a relationship in which God in Christ speaks first while we listen, only then may we respond. This relationship materialises in Christ's call to discipleship. In ancient times, the disciple would sit at the feet of the Master. The Master would speak, and the disciple would listen. This is the essence of *Lectio*; through/in our reading this we seek to do. Through it, in it, we sit at the feet of our Master, asking him for a word of life that we can take into ourselves, put it into practice, and live. *Lectio* is our way of discipleship of Christ, our way of sitting at his feet and listening.

To do *Lectio* properly, then, means we must be willing to be instructed, to be willing to abandon our own judgements and preferences. In ancient times, to listen meant to hear and obey. Obedience is the appropriate response of a disciple. When we first start off, we usually just simply try to put into practice what we read there in the Gospels and in the Scriptures more generally. As disciples we need and we want to respond, so we try to live in accord with Christ's teachings. But we soon discover there is more to following Christ than just obeying orders. The Bible is not a simple document. It was written over a long period of time. It was written by many different authors. It was written a long time ago. It was written as God's Word to circumstances not our own. So, at times it can seem unclear, at times it can seem contradictory, at times it can seem like just so much nonsense.

But just as it is hard to have a relationship with a person from a different culture — unless we take time to get to know them, to understand their customs, presuppositions and prejudices — so too with Christ. Christ is God's Word to us, but a Word made incarnate in another culture very different to our own, in another time very different to our own. For us to make any sense of this Word to us we must first try to translate it into a Word we can understand. To do this is not always easy, though in this we are aided by the many different translations of the Bible, a comparison of which will yield the many shades of meaning that surround the Words of the Bible in their original context. Here, too, we can gain considerable help from Biblical dictionaries and commentaries, and in annotated Bibles we can discover the many implicit references to other Biblical texts which colour and shape what is being said.

As we become more familiar with Scripture we begin to realise that a simple fundamentalism, which tries to simply apply what is literally said, just simply does not work: the customs and practices of a people from the distant past often do not and will not carry the meaning they once did when taken out of context and artificially grafted into our modern culture. Then, too, our modern world is vastly different from the ancient world. Things that confront us now were not even dreamed of in earlier times. Simply put, there is much in our modern world which the Bible just simply does not address. Thus do we discover that Scripture, God's Word, is very much an incarnate Word, a Word subject to the limitations of finite being, of being finite. Yet we are called to be Christ's disciple here in our modern world; we can be nowhere else.

As we struggle to live according to Christ's teaching, we find ourselves wondering what Christ would do in our situation. Thus do we find ourselves desiring to know Christ, the person, more and more. We want to know him, to become so infused with his Spirit that his Spirit will be the source of all we do. Only then will we know how Christ would live and act in our world, only then will we know what to do to live as Christ

did, for we will have put on the mind of Christ. This was the ancient aim of the Master/Disciple relationship. What was important was not so much the content taught, but the relationship, that prolonged contact whereby the disciple absorbs the spirit and style of the Master and so becomes just like the Master, or perhaps better, becomes the Master — where Master and disciple are one. This is the goal in *Lectio*. Our *Lectio* will be complete, will be successful when we have become like Christ, become another Christ — so that, in our doing, we proclaim: “To have seen me is to have seen Christ,” so much so that, for another, an encounter with us will be as an encounter with Christ, where we shall be the icon of Christ, his representative, for the seeker of truth, where we shall be the servant for those in need, where we shall be the friend of the lonely.