

## Session 4 – Meditation of Scripture

One of the great means of spiritual growth as Catholic is to integrate the richness of the Word of God into our spiritual life. There are many ways of doing this: studying the bible, preparing for Mass by reading the texts ahead of time, etc. This month we propose to start or refresh the practice of doing *lectio divina*: praying with a text, or more precisely, praying with the Gospel. The invitation this month is to start “reading” and meditating with the daily Gospel. Many saints of our Catholic tradition speak about the importance of contemplating the person of Jesus in the Gospels. For example, St Therese of Liseaux in the Story of a Soul shares how through the Gospel Jesus became the teacher of the science of love: “In my helplessness the Holy Scriptures and the *Imitation* are of the greatest assistance; in them I find a hidden manna, genuine and pure. But it is from the Gospels that I find most help in the time of prayer; from them I draw all that I need for my poor soul. I am always discovering in them new lights and hidden mysterious meanings. I know and I have experienced that “the Kingdom of God is within us.”[9] Our Lord has no need of books or teachers to instruct our souls. He, the Teacher of Teachers, instructs us without any noise of words. I have never heard Him speak, yet I know He is within me. He is there, always guiding and inspiring me; and just when I need them, lights, hitherto unseen, break in. I wish thee to read in the Book of Life in which is contained the science of love. . . .”.

Watch Video by Sister Bernadette:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiDP875Y6jQ&feature=youtu.be>

**1.READ: Extracts about meditation from *The Introduction to the Devout Life*, by Saint Francis de Sales, Part II.**

I specially recommend mental prayer and the prayer of the heart, in particular, meditation on the life and passion of our Lord; by often looking upon him, your soul will be filled with him, **you will understand the disposition of his heart and model your actions on his...** By keeping close to him and observing what he says and does and the desires of his heart, we shall learn, with the help of his grace, to speak and act like him, just as children learn to speak by listening and chattering to their mother...

Spend an hour every day, some time before the midday meal, in meditation, and **the earlier the better, because your mind will be less distracted, and fresh after a night's sleep;** but do not spend more than a hour unless your spiritual director expressly tell you to do so. If possible, make your meditation in church, because neither your family nor anyone else is likely to prevent you from staying there for an hour, whereas if you are dependent on others you might not be able to promise yourself an uninterrupted hour at home.

Always begin your prayers, mental or vocal, by **placing yourself in the presence of God;** you will soon see how helpful this is....

If because you are very busy, or for any other reason you miss your morning prayer, try to make up for this loss after the midday meal, as long after it as possible...if you cannot find any time for mental prayer during the day, **make up for it by saying many ejaculatory prayers, by spiritual reading** or some act of penance to correct your failure, making a firm resolution not to miss your prayers tomorrow...

Once you have realized you are in the presence of God, cast yourself down with deep reverence before him and acknowledge your unworthiness to appear in his majestic presence, asking for all the graces you need to serve him well, knowing that in his goodness he longs to grant them to you... **Then it is useful to represent to the imagination the scene of the mystery you are considering** as if it were actually taking place before you... to imagine the scene is to keep your mind on the mystery we

are considering so that it may not wander to and fro, just as we confine a bird in its cage or a hawk to our wrist...

**After using your imagination you begin to use your understanding, and this is what we call meditation;** in other words, making use of considerations to raise your heart to God and to the things of God... Having confined your spirit within the mystery you are considering, begin to consider in the way I said before. As long as you are gaining light and help from any consideration **stay there without passing on, as the bees do, who never leave a flower so long as they can still find some honey there;** but if you find a consideration unhelpful after having tried it for a while, pass on to another but proceed very gently and simply in this matter without any undue haste.

**Meditation moves your will to make spiritual acts such as the love of God and our neighbor, desire for heaven and eternal glory, or zeal for the salvation of souls,** it makes us long to be like the Lord, awakens a sense of compassion and joy, or fear of offending God or of judgment and hell, it leads us to hate sin and have confidence in the goodness and mercy of God.

We should make these spiritual acts as wholeheartedly as possible. However, Philotea, you must not dwell upon them to such extent that you forget to **make practical resolutions according to your own special needs...**

Meditation should be brought to a close by 3 spiritual acts. The first, an act of thanksgiving to God for the spiritual acts and resolutions which he has inspired in us and of his goodness and mercy which our meditation has revealed anew to us; the second, an oblation to God of our desires and resolutions; third, an act of petition to our Father for the graces and virtues of his Son, for a blessing on our resolutions that we may put them into practice faithfully...

I have suggested that after all this **one should gather a bouquet of devotion** and what I mean is this: those who walk in a lovely garden are loth to

leave it without taking away a few flowers to keep with them during the day, whose fragrance will give them pleasure. In the same way, after meditating, we should **choose a few thoughts which we found helpful and useful for our spiritual progress, so that we may call them to mind during the day** and spiritually breathe their fragrance.

## HOMEWORK FOR THE MONTH

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- a. Start your day praying with the daily Gospel for 10 minutes. Every day try to remember one phrase of the Gospel during the day.
- b. Pay more attention to the liturgy of the word during mass. Cherish in your heart one line or phrase of the readings. Pray with it when you receive Holy Communion so the word becomes flesh in you.
- c. Read short sections of a psalm during your work in order to live in the presence of God.
- d. Holy Hour 1 – Read Mark 4 – Parables of the Kingdom.
- e. Holy Hour 2 – Read Psalm 119 – About the Law of the Lord. (It's long so you can choose some sections of it)
- f. Holy Hour 3 – Read Lk 10:38-42 – Martha and Mary

## POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION MEETING

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How is your experience of reading the bible?

Do you experience Jesus speaking to you through his word?

What's your experience with the Word at Mass?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (see website)

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1. Read Article: "What is meditation?" by Benedict 16.

2. Read Article "How to do daily lectio"

3. You can listen to the talk by Tim Gray about lectio divina:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKrfXsY3SVU>

Search in google: Dr Tim Gray Five Steps to Transforming Your Prayer Life Lectio Divina (publish May 21,2016 – 26:14 min.)