

Praying with the Bible

Semenari Theologji Malaysia

Rev. Aaron Decker

28 April 2019

Lectio Divina

Lectio: Read. Read the passage slowly and attentively. In the traditional version of this prayer form, Benedictine monks were instructed to read the passage four times, putting emphasis in different places each time.

- Example: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. (John 14:27)

Meditatio: Meditate. Consider the text from different angles. Do not look for a particular meaning, try to analyze and find theological explanations, or pick the text apart with your knowledge and toolkit. Instead, simply hold it, keep your mind open, and allow Holy Spirit to speak.

- Example: Not trying to explore the kind of peace Jesus meant, or looking for clues in the passage or other passages to connect it with. Instead, simply sitting in Christ's peace for a while.

Oratio: Pray. Speak to God, and more importantly, listen for God's response.

- Example: God, I haven't had a lot of peace these days. I long for your peace. How can I find it?

Contemplatio: Contemplation. Contemplation is silent prayer that consists of directing love toward God. It will likely also foster an awareness of God's love for you, but don't try to force that. Just love God, and sit in that love.

- The twelfth century book, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, is a classic guide to contemplation. It's pretty confusing, being from a very different perspective from the 21st century world. But it's also a great text to enter into conversation with if you are confused about this step.

Factio: Action. This step is not a part of the traditional *lectio* process, but has been added on by the Basic Christian Communities movement in Latin and South America. They assert that true prayer, meditation, and dwelling in God's love must finally lead us to action in the world. When they read *lectio divina* together, these groups finally look for what God might be calling them to do in their community and context.

- Example: We know of a conflict going on among our town's governing board. We feel God is calling us to go to the board members and help them to move away from emotional reactions to one another, and toward recognizing their true desire, which is to find a solution to their problem that is good for our community.

Ignatian Contemplation

Preparatory prayer: Imagine God's loving gaze upon you. This move helps you slow down and enter into a time of prayer. Ask God for insight as you pray, for God's presence to become clear to you, and for whatever else it is you need in your prayer.

Prelude

- Read and briefly survey the story you are about to contemplate. Read slowly and examine the details. Recall them in your mind.

- Imagine the scene, its physical attributes, and the emotional atmosphere. Allow the scene to come alive in your imagination. Don't be afraid of filling in the details missing from the biblical account. What do you see? Where are you in the scene?
- Pray the desire the scene awakens in you. What grace do you want to receive from God in your contemplation?

Meditation

- Imagine the scene and consider the people in it. What is your vantage point? What details do you see? Are there things that draw you in? Don't be afraid to linger on one part of the story; you don't need to cover all of it. Watch carefully what happens, and how the people interact.
- Listen to what the people in the scene are saying. Who speaks to whom? What do they say to each other? Are any of the people confused about what is going on? What does Jesus have to say? What would you like to say or ask the people? Go ahead and do so, and see how they respond?
- Watch what the people are doing. How do the people treat each other? What does their posture tell you? What are the results of their interactions?

Colloquy:

- Talk to Jesus (or any member of the Holy Trinity) as one friend to another. Share the desires of your heart with God; be completely honest. No meaningful relationship with God can occur without this. As for what you want. Express thanks for any graces you have received during your prayer. Pray to be drawn deeper into Jesus' friendship so that you may become Christ's partner in God's holy purpose in the world.

David L. Miller. Friendship with Jesus: A Way to Pray the Gospel of Mark. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999.

African Prayer Groups

While this is designed for group prayer, it could easily be adapted for the individual.

First Reading

- One individual reads the passage slowly.
- Each person identifies the word or phrase that catches their attention.
- Each shares the word or phrase around the group, with no discussion.

Second Reading

- Another person reads the passage slowly from another translation.
- Each person identifies where this passage touches their life today.
- Each shares, with no discussion.

Third Reading

- Passage is read a third time, by a third reader, from a third translation.
- From what they've heard and shared, each person identifies what they believe God wants them to do. If possible, this should be a specific action to take in the next week.
- Each shares, with no discussion.

Intercession

- Each prays aloud for the person on their right and for what that person has shared.