

## *Lectio Divina on Life*

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**I**N THE ancient tradition *lectio divina* was understood as being one of the most important ways in which Christians experience God in creation. After all, the Scriptures are part of creation! If one is daily growing in the art of finding Christ in the pages of the Bible, one naturally begins to discover Him more clearly in aspects of the other things He has made. This includes, of course, our own personal history.

**O**UR OWN lives are fit matter for *lectio divina*. Very often our concerns, our relationships, our hopes and aspirations naturally intertwine with our pondering on the Scriptures, as has been described above. But sometimes it is fitting to simply sit down and "read" the experiences of the last few days or weeks in our hearts, much as we might slowly read and savor the words of Scripture in *lectio divina*. We can attend "with the ear of our hearts" to our own memories, listening for God's gentle presence in the events of our lives. We thus allow ourselves the joy of experiencing Christ reaching out to us through our own memories. Our own personal story becomes "salvation history."

**F**OR THOSE who are new to the practice of *lectio divina* a group experience of "lectio on life" can provide a helpful introduction. An approach that has been used at workshops at St. Andrew's Priory is detailed at the end of this article. Like the experience of *lectio divina* shared in community, this group experience of lectio on life can foster relationships in community and enable personal experiences to be consecrated - offered to Christ - in a concrete way.

**H**OWEVER, UNLIKE scriptural *lectio divina* shared in community, this group lectio on life contains more silence than sharing. The role of group facilitators or leaders is important, since they will be guiding the group through several periods of silence and reflection without the "interruption" of individual sharing until the end of the exercise. Since the experiences we choose to "read" or "listen to" may be intensely personal, it is important in this group exercise to safeguard privacy by making sharing completely optional.

**I**N BRIEF, one begins with restful silence, then gently reviews the events of a given period of time. One seeks an event, a memory, which touches the heart just as a word or phrase in scriptural *lectio divina* does. One then recalls the setting, the circumstances; one seeks to discover how God seemed to be present or absent from the experience. One then offers the event to God and rests for a time in silence. A suggested method for group *lectio divina* on life is given in the Appendix to this article.

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# ***Lectio on Life:***

## **Applying *Lectio Divina* to my personal Salvation History**

Purpose: to apply a method of prayerful reflection to a life/work incident (instead of to a scripture passage)

NOTE: Here the process is described for a group, but can be done alone.

### **Listening for the Gentle Touch of Christ the Word (The Literal Sense)**

1. Each person quiets the body and mind: relax, sit comfortably but alert, close eyes, attune to breathing...
2. Each person gently reviews events, situations, sights, encounters that have happened since the beginning of the retreat/or during the last month at work.

### **Gently Ruminating, Reflecting (Meditatio - Meditation)**

3. Each person allows the self to focus on one such offering.
  - a) Recollect the setting, sensory details, sequence of events, etc.
  - b) Notice where the greatest energy seemed to be evoked. Was there a turning point or shift?
  - c) In what ways did God seem to be present? To what extent was I aware then? Now?

### **Prayerful Consecration, Blessing (Oratio - Prayer)**

4. Use a word or phrase from the Scriptures to inwardly consecrate - to offer up to God in prayer - the incident and interior reflections. Allow God to accept and bless them as your gift.

### **Accepting Christ's Embrace; Silent Presence to the Lord (Contemplatio - Contemplation)**

5. Remain in silence for some period.

### **Sharing our Lectio Experience with Each Other (Operatio - Action; works)**

6. Leader calls the group back into "community."
7. All share briefly (or remain in continuing silence).

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