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LAY SERVANTS OF JESUS CHRIST PRIEST

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TOPIC 5

LECTIO DIVINA

METHODOLOGY

Guide to study the texts personally:

1. Read the text and underline the ideas you want to highlight or the doubts that arise. Take note of them.

2. Bring to prayer the underlined ideas that you would highlight and the doubts about the text. Explain what calls you feel God is making to you for your daily life.

3. What commitment emerges from these calls? How can you bring them to life? Where do you find resistance?

Presentation of the questions worked on to the person in charge of the formation process.

INITIATION TO THE PRAYERFUL READING OF THE BIBLE. "LECTIO DIVINA".

P. FIDEL OÑORO C.

If a text doesn't change you,
It means that you have not read it.
(G. Soares-Prabhu)

PRESENTATION

In this first year of preparation for the Great Jubilee, which is eminently Christological, it is the Holy Father's desire that we return "with renewed interest to Sacred Scripture" (TMA 40.3) in order to know the true identity of Jesus Christ. The reason he gives us is that "in the revealed text the Father himself lovingly comes to meet us and dialogues with us, revealing to us the nature of his only-begotten Son and his plan of salvation for humanity" (1bid).

One of the most appropriate ways to return to the Holy Scriptures is the practice of Lectio Divina. This prayerful reading bears the imprint of the Fathers of and has been cultivated through the centuries at the heart of monastic life. It is currently being rediscovered, with great enthusiasm among lay people, men and women religious and pastors, as a fruit of the biblical movement and the Second Vatican Council.

That is why I am particularly pleased to present this text prepared by Fr. Fidel Oñoro C., at the request of the General Secretariat of CELAM, which, together with the teaching of the method of Lectio Divina, proposes concrete ways of carrying it out both personally and in parish communities.

The text has the great merit of making known in a few pages the dynamics of this method of prayer, making use of the teachings of Guigo II, the Carthusian monk, enriched by the mystical and poetic gaze of St. John of the Cross and Sister Isabel de la Trinidad.

The author teaches us that Lectio Divina is a concrete, simple, real and possible method to live from each Word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. (Mt. 4:4)..

+ Jorge E. Jiménez Carvajal
Bishop of Zipaquirá, Colombia
Secretary General of CELAM

I. DISCIPLES LISTENING TO THE MASTER

Fedor Dostoyevsky tells in his novel "The Brothers Karamazov" that the old and wise monk Zossima advised his young friend Alyosha to read the Holy Scriptures to simple people "simply as they are", and added, "you will see how the simple heart understands the Word of God".

Jesus is moved because the Kingdom of God was being understood by the little ones (see Lk. 10:21). In them Jesus saw his ideal listeners, those who had the capacity to live with him a deeper communication, a closer relationship. That is why he considered them his brothers, his sisters, and his mother (see Mk 3:35). They know the tone of his voice and therefore can follow him (Jn. 10:3). That is the inner portrait of the disciple of Jesus. The authentic disciple is the one who lives listening with a heart totally stripped and nailed to God.

Every time we scrutinize the Holy Scriptures we encounter that challenge.

And we don't want to read without understanding. We do not want to be left without knowing the gift of God that the inspired word offers us. That is why we search and ask. It is like the eunuch of the Queen of Candace, who in the middle of the desert is sitting in his chariot reading the Bible. Felipe approaches her and asks: "Do you understand what you are reading?" The eunuch answers: "How can I understand if no one is my guide?" (Acts 8:30ff). And he invited him and sat in the car.

Prayerful reading or Lectio Divina is intended to be a way of realizing this total way of approaching the Bible, to go to the depths. Let us take advantage of the methods that help us to understand in all its aspects, whether they are called historical-critical or literary or sociological or psychological.... The list is long. All of them are very useful and we value them. But we feel that something is still missing.

The Pontifical Biblical Commission (1993) sought the precise terms to define what it is: "It is a reading, individual or communal, of a more or less long passage of, accepted as the Word of God, which takes place under the movement of the Spirit in meditation, prayer and contemplation." And there he gave the key: it is the Holy Spirit who guides the reading.

Jesus had promised, "The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (Jn. 14:26).

Hearing Jesus' voice, after His death and resurrection, is done this way because He wants us to understand the Bible: "And then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." Lk 24:45). He wants us to intuit it profoundly from his Person, because through his paschal mystery revelation has reached its fullness. (See Mt 5:17).

Lectio Divina, or prayerful reading of, is our contribution to the offer that Jesus wants to make to us. He gives us His Spirit. We offer an attentive ear and heart to His Word.

Lectio Divina is basically that: the exercise of a heart ready to encounter God through Lectio Divina. It is an exercise of reading, but it is also a prayer. Its fruits do not come so much from the accumulation of knowledge about it as from the spiritual life of the one who knows the taste of it because he knows his Author.la Santa Palabra.

This is not an expression of today's creativity in matters of prayer. Perhaps we are, as in the time of King Josiah, rediscovering the Torah scroll. The method comes from the Bible itself, from the practice of the rabbis, and particularly, from the Fathers of and some spiritual authors of the first millennium of the Christian era. Although relegated, this method of prayer was never lost in the history of the Gospel as the monks preserved it and brought it to us. The Second Vatican Council (Dei Verbum 25) recognized this vividly and, since then, the documents of Vatican have not ceased to recommend it.

The question now is how to learn it, how to initiate ourselves pedagogically in it. This is what we are going to propose in the following steps::

- We will try to grasp the dynamics proper to Lectio, which is first and foremost a spiritual dynamic.
- We will describe its development by offering some practical indications.
- We will give some clues for the service of the Word, especially in the parish, starting from Lectio Divina.

II. II.THE READING OF LECTIO DIVINA

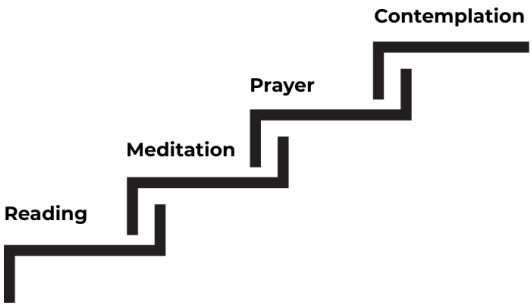
As a method of reading Sacred Scripture, it is carried out through well-defined steps, which can be expressed didactically not only to understand them better but also to practice and teach them.la Lectio Divina

Starting from the teaching of Guigo II, the Carthusian, in his Scala Claustralium (II and III) we will show from various angles the dynamic aspect of Lectio Divina. This will allow us to better understand the possibilities of the proposal and will facilitate the creative development of the method later.

A. The dynamics of Lectio Divina captured from five angles

We present the dynamics of Lectio Divina from five comparisons that approach it from different angles. In the end we will draw the consequences.

1. 1.The Staircase



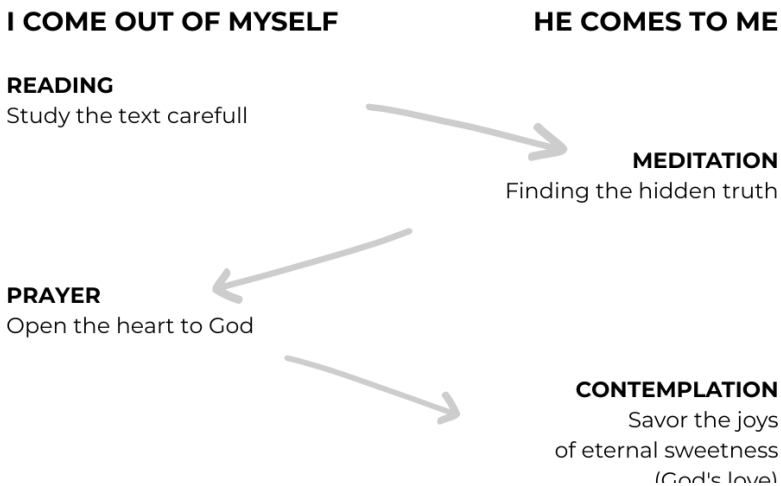
Monk Guigo II compared Lectio Divina to a ladder, where each stage of the process is a stepping-stone. Its base rests on and its upper end penetrates the heart of God and "searches the secrets of the heavens." The Monk told his intuition as follows:la Biblia:

"One day, during manual work, I began to think about the spiritual exercise of man, and suddenly four spiritual degrees offered themselves to the reflection of my spirit: reading, meditation, prayer, contemplation."

2. The Word that traces its path in the heart

The image of the staircase already says practically everything. But still on the track of Guigo, differentiating and at the same time trying to grasp the unity of the spiritual degrees indicated, we could add that the method of Lectio works like the beating of the heart; systole and diastole, expansion and concentration, openness and acceptance, search and encounter, cry and response.... It's dynamic. Its movements correspond to that of our inner impulses.

With the key words of Guigo himself we could visualize these movements as follows:



3. Summer and winter

Some authors have compared the dynamics of Lectio Divina with the activity of the ant that during the summer works tirelessly in the collection of food and, when winter comes, takes refuge and survives with that food. Or, like the bee that at first sucks the nectar from the flower and then enters the sacred rest, in the honeycomb, to give way to the elaboration of honey.

In the same way, Lectio is practically reduced to two moments that can be better specified in two double movements: that of reading-meditation and that of prayer-contemplation. A time of work and another of elaboration and use of the results.

Lectio is also like someone who takes an orange, patiently removes the rind and exposes the pulp, with his eyes he tastes it and then tastes it, French toast by French toast, savoring its juice.

Guigo says: "the letter is in the shell, the meditation in the substance, the prayer in the expression of desire and contemplation in the possession of the sweetness obtained.

We could still say that the activity of the reader-prayer is concentrated in these two moments: an active one, which is the fatigue of reading-meditation, and a passive one, which is that of prayer-contemplation. The continuity between these two moments is analogous to the process of feeding and digestion. The comparison is valid. It was not strange for the people of the Bible to hear that it had to be eaten (see Ezek 3:3 and Rev 10:8-11). Guigo told it like this: "Reading brings substantial nourishment to the mouth, meditation chews and crushes this food, prayer obtains taste, contemplation is the very sweetness that cheers and restores." la Biblia.

Lectio is the process by which he passes from the "letter" to the "Spirit" who gives life (see 2 Cor 3:6).la Escritura

4. The Parable of the Beggar

No such parable appears in the Bible, although it could be suggested in Jesus' teaching in Luke 11:9: "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you." It seems that Jesus is describing the activity of a beggar who arrives at the door of our house, knocks, insists... and if he sees that no one comes out, he goes and knocks on the window and insists again. And if we refuse to open, then he goes to the neighbor's house and continues his pilgrimage from door to door, until someone opens the door and gives him a piece of bread. This is their daily activity.

So too is the person praying in Lectio Divina. He is a seeker who identifies with the poor beggar who seeks his daily bread. Such a guy has to make an effort and fight to achieve it, he lives by insistence and does not give up easily.

One comes to Lectio humbly, devoid of everything, hungry and thirsty for: "as a doe long for streams of water" (Ps. 42:2).la Palabra

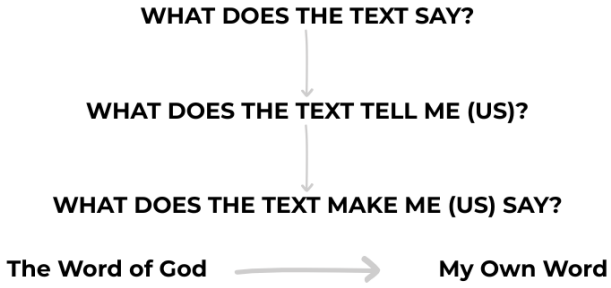
Driven by thirst, one travels the path of search. Guigo also saw this process in the parable of the beggar: "Reading seeks the sweetness of the blessed life, meditation finds it, prayer asks for it, contemplation tastes it." This intuition that translates the teaching of Jesus into a method has a simple didactic formulation that St. John of the Cross offers us:

> *"Search by reading and you will find by meditating,*
> *knock in prayer and when you open you will have beheld*
> *(Sayings of Light and Love, 157)*

5. The Word becomes a word

The Word of God is a word that "says" and "causes to be said." When it "remains active" in us (1 Thess. 2:13), it makes us pronounce our authentic word, the one that best expresses the truth about ourselves. It is as if he dwells in our midst (cf. Jn 1:14) and specifically in ourselves (see Jn 14:23), he grows in such a way that in the end he emerges strong in prayer, in preaching, in consolation, in deeds.

This is also the dynamic of Lectio Divina. A Guigo of our time, Frei Carlos Mesters, recalls that there are three simple and key questions that guide the process of being heard, then appropriated and finally expressed again.



The task of Lectio Divina is to help unfold the full efficacy of the power hidden in the seed (see Mk 4:30-32) and its capacity to generate something new, authentic, from God. This is his secret.la Palabra.

B. From dynamics to dynamics

In brief statements, we would like to establish some parameters that derive from our observation of the dynamics of Lectio Divina:

1. Lectio Divina as an instrument of search integrates two types of knowledge: that which is developed by the rational way and that which is developed by the emotional way. Reason and the heart are integrated in the search for balance between what properly corresponds to the exercise of reading and to the spiritual exercise. There everything that comes from the academic study of , but also everything that corresponds to the characteristics proper to the spiritual life is valued, respected and used, since by faith itself the realities of faith are grasped more deeply.

2. Lectio Divina has a clear, logical, solid internal structure. Once the process has been promoted, it can develop by itself because it corresponds to an intrinsic logic of the sentence path. Many times, we will have practiced it without knowing it.

3. The process is clear without being rigid or mechanical. If it were, it would be blocking the action of the Spirit. That is why it cannot be properly said that reading, meditation, prayer, contemplation are the steps of the method. These are rather dimensions, movements, great stages of a path that is traveled. Lectio Divina offers such elasticity that we discover it, from the pedagogical point of view, as a mine of suggestions: it can be recreated and adapted for individuals or groups taking into account their age and situation. This dynamic allows you to create many dynamics or didactic proposals. That is, the dynamics of allows it to be approached in many creative ways. la Lectio.

4. But not all Lectio Divina movements allow for the creation of dynamics. A first difficulty is that it is not always easy to recognize the passage from one movement to another. The second difficulty is the very nature of such movements. When one enters into the movement

of prayer and contemplation, they come from an impulse of their own that corresponds to the originality of the action of , which it would not be prudent or convenient to try to direct externally.

5. The success of Lectio Divina is strongly linked to the quality of spiritual life. Let us also remember that it presupposes faith in the action of the Spirit that leads the process. This aspect will have to be carefully taken care of, especially in its preparation.la Lectio

As disciples we want to place ourselves at the feet of Jesus to learn that "hearing" that makes it possible to grasp his Word in depth and put it into practice. He says: "Take heed therefore how you hear" (Lk 8:18).

III. THE LEARNING OF LECTIO DIVINA

Once the dynamics of Lectio Divina have been recognized, we can begin to learn it.

Lectio is learned by continuous, preferably daily, exercise. Even better if you have the support of a companion with whom to share this journey of prayer.

In an attempt to design the itinerary and to give some practical indications for its full development, we will present below the process of a Lectio according to the four movements of reading - meditation - prayer - contemplation, but we will begin first with the necessary stage of preparation.

The experience of Lectio Divina goes beyond its four movements. As many moments can develop as one progresses on the spiritual path. That is why we then offer some directions in which it is prolonged in the spiritual life.

To conclude, we will try to answer three questions that are often asked by those who exercise Lectio Divina.

For pedagogical reasons, our indications are oriented above all to the "personal" praxis of Lectio. However, we are very aware that the proper place of is that, later we will see how to turn it into a community experience.

A. A.The Preparation to enter : the "sonorous solitude". la Lectio Divina

"The Master is there and calls you" (John 11:38).

Preparation is decisive for the success of Lectio Divina. To be able to listen to another, you first must lower the tone of your voice, be silent, concentrate. The ideal climate for is what St. John called the "sonorous solitude" (Canticle 15), that is, silencing the noise of so many voices that invade us to catch the sweet whistle of the Spirit in God.

We can consider ourselves ready when we have succeeded in entering this receptive, attentive silence, aware of the powerful presence of God who lovingly comes to meet us with the gift of his Word.

Many times, this moment becomes a real spiritual combat. Especially on those days when we have a lot of commitments or we have a problem, or we are tired or we come from some hectic activity. Thank God, there will be days when it will be relatively easy to get into Lectio. The important thing to keep in mind is that...

> *It is not possible to enter into the intelligence of the text without the heart pacified and possessed by the Holy Spirit.*
> *(See Lk 24:36.45.49*

Let us retain these two aspects: peacemaking of the heart and possession of the Spirit of God. Each one, starting from the knowledge and control he has of himself and his experience of God, will be able to find the way to carry out this preparation. However, we would like to give some suggestions:

1. The pacification of the heart

The heart is, so to speak, the organ of Lectio. As he teaches, the heart is the innermost part of our personality, the depth of our consciousness (cf. Mk 7:21). It is there that the Lord wants to begin to speak, to put his creative and transforming touch.

As in the parable of the seed, a prepared ground is needed: "the cares of the world, the seduction of riches and other lusts choke the Word, and it remains unfruitful". (Mk 4:19)

It is the Lord himself who kindly invites us, as he did with Martha: "Martha, Martha, you worry and worry about many things, when only one is necessary." (Lk. 10:41ff). His instruction is clear: "enter your room" (Mt 6:6), that is, into the space of your intimacy, into the place of your heart.

We could present the Lord's exhortation in brief didactic imperatives useful for our preparation:

- "Come into your room!" Get to know the space where your intimacy lives, take refuge there, look for silence, solitude.
- "Delimit your time!" Do not show the pettiness of your efforts, be generous because your time is God's.
- "Help yourself with something!", if you consider it necessary, for example: an icon, the light of a candle, a cross, maybe a little music... Remember that it is just a help.

- "Question your heart!" Become aware of the way you present yourself before God, how you are now, and what you are ready to do in this Lectio. Enter into prayer in your own reality, with all that you are. Remember your people, for their sake you seek the Lord.

- "Pray!" like King Solomon: "Give me a heart that will listen.... to discern." (Cf. 1 Kings 3:9).

And a practical suggestion: listen to your own breathing, feel its rhythm. This helps concentration. The rhythm of breathing is like the thermometer of our state of mind, of our situation of peace. Sometimes you're agitated... Become aware of this and help yourself.

When we throw a pebble into the lake, when its waters are calm, its waves are clearer, and we see them expand until they kiss the ends..

2. The invocation of the Spirit

Just as in the celebration of the Eucharist it is the action of the Holy Spirit that works the transformation of the species of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord, so it is this same Spirit that molds the whole Body of Christ. In we live this powerful influence of the Holy Spirit that leads us to the "Complete Truth" (Jn 16:13), that is, to Jesus in the Scriptures; and it updates it in us. The Spirit is the "Paraclete", the assistant of the lector - praying and that is why we invoke him. (See Jn 14:23; DV 12).

St. Paul points out to Bible readers that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). What is important is not the text but the fact that they become living Bibles: "Evidently you are a letter of Christ, written

by our ministry, written not in ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh, in hearts." (2 Cor.3:3). With the invocation of the Spirit, the correct starting point is marked because this is how it begins to be "divine".

The best invocation of the Spirit is the one that God inspires in each one. We are all qualified to create our own "Come, Creator Spirit." But, as we know, prayers made by others are also a school of prayer, especially those that are endorsed by the Church. Here is a beautiful prayer inspired by biblical texts that can help us:

"Our God, Father of light,
You have sent your Word into the world,
Wisdom that comes out of your mouth
And that he has reigned over all peoples
From the earth.
(Eccl. 24:6-8).
You wanted her to make her dwelling in Israel
And, that, through Moses, the Prophets
And the Psalms,
(Lk. 24:44)
She manifests your will
and tell your people about Jesus, the awaited Messiah.
Finally, you have willed that your own Son,
Eternal Word that proceeds from you (Jn 1:1-14)
Become flesh
And let him pitch his tent in the midst of us.
He was born of the Virgin Mary
And he was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:35)
Send your Spirit upon me now:
May He give me a heart capable of hearing

(1 Kings 3:9),
may I find you in your Holy Scriptures
and beget your Word in me.
May the Holy Spirit lift the veil from my eyes
(2 Cor 3:12-16).
May He lead me to the Complete Truth
(Jn. 16:13)
and give me intelligence and perseverance.
I ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord,
May he be blessed forever and ever.
Amen."
(E. Bianchi)

Instead of an elaborate prayer, a simple invocation can be made in the form of an ejaculatory from the Psalm of Lectio Divina, Psalm 119 (118). For example, this phrase can be repeated to the rhythm of the breath: "I call upon you with all my heart, O Lord, and I will keep your precepts" (Ps. 119:145); or this other: "Behold, I love thy ordinances, Lord, give me my life for thy love" (Ps. 119:150). In this way we plead for the gift of the Spirit. Psalm 119 will always be a source of suggestions for this prayer at the beginning of the Lectio Divina.

B. The four movements of Lectio Divina

"Search by reading."

(First movement):

The reading and study of a chosen passage is the basis of all Lectio Divina.

We open the text with great respect. At this moment every letter, every sign of Scripture is worth a lot. The ancients venerated the Scriptures almost as the Holy Eucharist itself, not a crumb can be missed.

Respect for the text is expressed in the renunciation of the imposition of any previous idea, of taking away or accommodating anything. We want it to shine on its own; Let him speak first. We seek an objective, careful, humble reading, and be aware of our ignorance and our need for it. It happens, sometimes, that it is a passage already known. Then we will have to say like St. Therese: "I had better read the same verses (of the Gospel) a thousand times because each time I find a new meaning in them."

What you need to do is read slowly from the beginning to the end, reread it, and do it again. Little by little the details appear, and each word makes its weight felt. The lyrics become images, they begin to speak and we appropriate them.

We seek to make our own study of the text. There are many studies already done that can be useful. However, the important thing is that this is our turn and that it is worth a lot to be curious, restless, dissatisfied. We enter into Scripture as seekers, as St. John said of : "with no other light and guide than that which burned in the heart" (Ascent, 3)

What does the text say?

Four simple indications can help us:

Our obsession in this first movement is to ask ourselves:

a. a.Grasp the main ideas:

- Retain strong voices from the text: with pencil in hand, underline the phrase(s) that impact you the most.
- Subdivide the text: the more subdivided, the better. It is like peace that is eaten in small pieces.
- Distinguish who is talking and what he is talking about: whether he is a narrator or an actor, who is this character, what his characteristics are. It will never be the same when Jesus speaks as when someone else speaks.
- Help ourselves with our own reading practice: to try to intuit what is fundamental and what is secondary. Everything that is known is applied.

b. Deepen:

- Ask pertinent questions about the text
- Read the footnotes of the version we have.
- Consult any parallel texts or other references indicated in the version. Maybe you know others.
- Refer to a comment, when we have it at hand.

c. Feel the text

Give space to our own emotion. Perhaps there is a phrase, which, although it is secondary, has impacted us. Well, it must be appropria-

ted. God speaks to me in it. The important thing is to always respect her meaning within the context: that it be what she says and not what I want her to tell me. Respecting the context is the first rule of reading the Bible.

d. Appropriate it

- Read aloud the passage. In this way we will be able to better feel the emotion of the words, their rhythm, their breathing, their emphasis, their silences. Each page of the Bible has its originality. We will never tire of this exercise.
- Repeat a phrase or an idea that synthesizes our reading. Repeat it until you memorize it.
- Try to represent the text in our imagination (when the passage is narrative): With a reconstruction of the scene, placing ourselves in the shoes of the characters. A little fantasy gives us the sensitivity of the text, what would we have said? How would we have behaved?
- Rewriting the passage: it is an ancient practice that helps identification with the text. Cassian said: "penetrated by the same sentiments with which the text was written, we become, so to speak, its authors."

And there are still many other resources that we can use for our study of the text. You don't have to do everything. What is useful is enough to "eat the text". (We will give other clues later)

This moment of study is so rich that it runs the risk of extending indefinitely without ever getting the spiritual fruit of reading. That is why there is a moment when we have to stop.

When to stop? Give yourself enough time for personal study of the text. But once it starts to be ours, when an idea rings and starts to resonate in the heart, it's time to stop. This is the idea that will be the center of our Lectio, which will be the manifestation of the Lord's love in us.

We are already in the second movement. It is time to close the Bible and bow our heads before the Lord.

"... You will find meditating."
(Second movement)

Meditation is the natural effect of reading: it comes within reading from the moment it has begun to impact us, making us no longer only talk about the text but also about ourselves. The Word of God becomes our mirror.

Meditation is done with the Word still warm, resounding in the heart. All this movement takes place in interiority. Some compare it to the beginning of pregnancy. St. Clement of Alexandria seemed to see the reader who entered meditation as the hummingbird who, after chopping the flowers, gathers himself to let the nectar transform into food.

In Lectio Divina, meditation has its own characteristics that distinguish it from that which is mental speculation. Here it is closer to the style of the people of the Bible. Israel and the early Christians were not properly a people of philosophers or scholars. His concern was to try to grasp the actuality of God in his journey, in the events of every day, to live in harmony with Him to take new steps according to His will. It is a slow and tiring activity. For this reason, Cassian preferred to speak of "rumination", that is, of savoring it slowly. la Palabra

The People of the Bible knew how to meditate by "connecting the dots", trying to discover how one thing ties in with another, scrutini-

zing the meaning of events, the logic of God's action in the midst of everything, "the hidden truth" as Guigo says.

We too can see how "this scripture has just heard is fulfilled today" (Lk 4:21). The Word thus discovers its permanent actuality; the veils begin to fall. Through meditation we enter into communion with the same spiritual experience of the People of God and of those who are still pilgrims in the history of God. We do so with so many brothers and sisters who every day try to interpret their reality and encourage their journey in the Lord starting from God (see Acts 17:11).

To do our meditation we let ourselves be guided by the key question:

¿What does the text tell me (us)?

To answer "we connect the dots" on two levels:

a. We associate it with life

This is what Mary did, who compared the angel's announcement with her own life (cf. Lk 1:34).

- The first result is a better knowledge of ourselves. We see ourselves in the light of God, with God's gaze. The story of our wanderings, of our journey in the direction of God or, perhaps, a little against the way, emerges.
- When the sweet word becomes acidic (cf. Ez 3:3) it is a sign that the Word has been apprehended . It is characteristic of it to put us on the brink of crisis because it is a double-edged sword that "searches the feelings and thoughts of the heart" and leaves us "naked and uncovered" before God (Heb. 4:12-13).
- In this being naked before God , the Word reveals to us that God

is greater than our poor heart (see 1 Jn. 3:20).

b. We associate it with other texts already known

It is done as a "collection" of other biblical texts already known that we group around the confession of faith of the Church. This allows it to become even more vivid and clearer.

- We carry out this exercise by recalling two principles: "the unity of Sacred Scripture" and that "it explains". These two principles are one consequence of the other.la Bibliala Biblia
- It must be taken into account that the quantity is not sought but the quality of the food.

Thus the movement of meditation shortens the distances: between the experience of the People of God and mine, between the yesterday of the text and the today of its message, between the Word and, of course, with God himself, its Author, from whom we now hear his living and current voice through which he makes known to us what he wants from us. la Vida.

We experience that "the Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it" (Deuteronomy 30:40) and of those who "take pleasure in the Lord, meditate on his law (whisper) day and night" (Ps. 1:2).

Meditation can be prolonged throughout the day, thus allowing the Word to rest in us, listening continuously to its "whisper", experiencing the effect of prolonged contact.

The important thing is that we try to leave all the time necessary for the Word to have its effect, so that the seed may grow "even if we do not know how" (see Mk 4:27).

"Call in prayer"

(Third movement)

Prayer springs spontaneously from meditation. Scripture has been the nurse that has taken us by the hand to the immediacy of God. (Cf. Jn. 10:4).la Voz

No doubt we are already praying from the beginning. In this spirit we have done the reading and meditation, in that attitude we have welcomed the action of the Holy Spirit, inspirer of our Lectio.

If meditation can be compared to conception, prayer can be compared to childbirth. Prayer is to carry out through the lips the cry of our heart burned by the Word. There we make everything that has arisen in our interiority explicit. And "the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness, for we do not know how to ask to speak as we ought" (Rom. 8:26). He makes word what remained as an inner groan. (Rom. 8:23) and directs our cry towards the God who revealed himself in Jesus of Nazareth with the Face of "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15).

Our prayer is not confined to the limits of a personal and exclusive relationship with God. It is also the Voice of the whole creation crying out for its deliverance to "share in the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Rom. 8:21). The prayer that springs from is prayer open to the ecclesial reality, to the life of the people. Their groans are also ours.la Lectio

It's like in the Psalms. They always have a concrete view, they pray the Word and the Life. In Lectio our prayer is always psalmic because it is the creative answer to the question:

What does the text make me (us) say?

As it is spontaneous and creative we cannot give many indications, only to highlight that there are four typical levels in which this experience can be lived:

a. a.The Compunction of the Heart

The verification of our physical, moral and intellectual weakness can even lead us to the "baptism of tears", because we feel disproportionate to the immense love of God. We are not God, we are Adam. And, like him, we feel shame, but we do not hide. Origen said: "The Lord afflicts you with an arrow of love" (Commentary on the Song).

b. The Plea

Like blind Bartimaeus, we cry out: "Have mercy on me" (Mk 10:47). Each one can recreate and repeat this prayer and understand how God loves him. We are certain that whenever we have been given the Bread of the Word we have also received everything we need to live. The Father does not forget us. But, once again, we must first ask for the Holy Spirit. That is the essential thing (Lk. 11:13).

c. Gratitude

It is the affirmation that God has become my neighbor. He is my friend. The Lord has done, is doing, and will continue to do wonders in me. (Lk. 1:49). Our prayer becomes Eucharistic and will be even more beautiful when we can unite it to the celebration of the Sacrament, making unity between the Bread of the Word and the Bread of Love.

d. Surrender

It is our "amen" to God's Word, the total acceptance of His will upon us. Like Mary: "let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

So, then, inspired by the Spirit, we begin to recite our own Psalm. Our heart has become a living Liturgy.

"... They will open you contemplating"
(Fourth movement):

It is prayer in its highest quality, in all its purity. It is not a static experience or a paradisiacal situation, but the peaceful, meek recognition of the Lord's coming to our incapacity, to our poor humanity. It is a coming that heals and restores.

We have lived it little by little in the process when we delighted in understanding. Now there is a new impetus on the sentence path. The mystics have seen here the reward of all their efforts; taste the flashes of grace, even if it comes only as dewdrops. It is that immersion in the tremendous simplicity and sweetness of the great Love of God or, as St. John of the Cross says: "to be loving the beloved."

The contemplative movement, prolonged in time, is what remains of Lectio. We were looking for God and He has come with the Gift of His Word. Now there are no questions, only the joy of receiving. There is a little light and we recreate ourselves in it. The gift of contemplation is the gift of vision like that of the pilgrims of Emmaus (see Lk 24:31). It is a vision in which we dare to indicate three moments:

a. The contemplation of the Crucified Lord – Risen One

The top of the ladder of Lectio Divina is also the summit of Golgotha. There we find the Lord as he has wanted to reveal himself in history. As in Luke 23:48: what is appreciated is not a theatrical spectacle but the tragedy of God, a tragedy of love for humanity. We see with the eyes of this great mystery. The contemplative is the one who, by the inspiration of the Spirit, sees in the power of life, the salvation of God. la Cruz.

b. The understanding of history in the light of his Word

From the top you can see the whole, you can see how what we see daily is only fragmented. From the depth of the mystery one sees the breadth of God's plan. It is as if the Lord were calling upon us with the words of the Apocalypse: "Come up here, and I will teach you..." (4:1). From there we can see life in God's plan: the life of each brother, the life of our people, what we are called to be as the work of his hands. We also discovered our mission within that project. We can see, as if in a transparency, the logic of events, even the most unfortunate and confusing – the true dimension of the problems and their possible solutions. Contemplation is the gift of new eyes to look at reality. It is the school of the prophets.

c. The tasting of the taste of the Resurrection that surrounds life

In the joy of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22) we discover ourselves as new men, as new creatures. It is the awakening of the baptismal conscience: our life is Jesus Crucified – Risen, living within us (see Gal. 2:20). Our union with Him disposes us to a life of Love, to undertake courageous actions, to assume death for love in the expectation of life.

In this Spirit we glimpse the signs of resurrection that are in us and in our people. And we enjoyed them. We believe in victory, we know the solidity of our hope, we taste a little "of heaven on earth", as Sister Isabel de la Trinidad would say. Or as we once heard a simple woman say: "heaven begins here on earth when we realize that the signs of God accompany our lives."

Contemplation can thus be prolonged, sustained by the most beautiful of all forms of prayer: adoration and praise.

But always with my feet on the ground, with a deep realism, it is as Frei Carlos Mesters says: "In dreams I managed to contemplate a little resurrection. When one is awake, one cannot see that waste of resurrection because one always has the shadows of suffering and struggle. It's going to take time..."

C. CONCLUDING LECTIO

We begin with reading and end with spiritual exercise. This was exactly what we sought in Lectio Divina: to apprehend the spiritual institution, the power of , which is in is what has distinguished it from all other possible readings of la Palabrala Biblia. Estola Biblia.

Precisely because it is spiritual, one does not even realize when it ends. Lectio is a vital dynamic to which it is difficult to pinpoint each of its times precisely. What is clear is that methodologically he always returns to the same starting point to repeat the path in such a way that we experience what the prophet Isaiah says: "Morning after morning he awakens me in my ear, so that I may listen like the disciples. The Lord LORD has opened my ear" (Isaiah 50:4-5).

As an aid to our own exercise, we suggest ending with a short vocal prayer to thank the Lord for what we have experienced throughout the Lectio.

Once again, we give the floor to Guigo II, the Carthusian, to teach us his beautiful way of praying:

> *"Lord, when you break the Bread of Holy Scripture,*
> *You make me known for this Breaking of Bread.*
> *The more I know you, the more I want to know you,*
> *not only in the bark of the letter,*
> *but in the knowledge of the taste of experience.*

I do not ask you for this gift because of my merits
but because of your mercy....
Give me, O Lord, the earnest money of the inheritance to come,
a taste at least of the celestial rain
to quench my thirst, for I burn with love."
(Scala, VI)

D. The "Formation of Christ" in us, according to Lectio Divina

"My children, for whom I suffer labor pains,
until you see Christ formed in you."
(Gal. 4:19

From contemplation, the last movement of Lectio Divina, horizons begin to be glimpsed in the spiritual life that impel it along paths of Christian maturity.

Because the Word dwells in us by becoming one with our flesh, the practice of Lectio is a continuous education so that we may have "the same mind as Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5), to feel, decide, and act according to his Heart (see Acts 13:22). It is, therefore, a true school of formation for the disciples of Jesus in which the ways of His following are learned.

Sensitivity to the Word educates us to be docil to the Holy Spirit so that, as St. John Eudes says, "He may make our being a living Gospel and a living book, written inside and out, in which the life of Jesus is perfectly imprinted." (OC III, 54).

Let us see, then, also as a sketch, as in a drawing, the prolongation of the Lectio. We present it in five other new movements that follow one another like the waves of the sea, one on top of the other, strong,

rhythmic, irresistible. When these waves become familiar you can learn to sail better in them.

1. The wave of consolation: in the joy of the Spirit

The prayer that flows from Lectio is lived with joy in the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22), an emotion with which Jesus also prayed (Lk 10:22), because one feels intimately the taste of God, of the things of Christ. The joy of praise pervades everything.

St. John of the Cross alludes to this experience when he sings of God's transparency in all things: "And all those who wander from You give me a thousand graces in telling, and all more wound me, and leave me dying, I know not what they remain stammering" (Canticle, 7).

This emotion is included in the gift of contemplation, it is what in the spiritual realm has been called "consolation".

Consolation becomes like an atmosphere in which the heart can move freely. Cardinal Martin teaches how "only from consolation are born the courageous choices of poverty, chastity, obedience, fidelity, forgiveness, because it is the place, the atmosphere proper to the great interior choices. What does not come from this gift does not last long and can easily only be the fruit of the moralism that we impose on ourselves."

2. The wave of recognition of inner impulses: Christian discernment

It expresses even more clearly the scope of consolation. The person praying becomes like a kind of spiritual antenna that knows how to grasp what is and what is not of the Gospel.

It is the learning of spiritual sensitivity of which St. Paul speaks: "What I ask in my prayer is that your love may continue to grow more and more in perfect knowledge and in all discernment (fine sensitivity)" (Phil. 1:9); which in reality is always a displacement, a continual living uninstalled in front of the world: "Do not accommodate yourselves to the present world, but transform yourselves with a new mentality, so that you can discern the will of God: the good, the pleasant, the perfect." (Rom. 12:2)

3. The wave of "qualitative leaps": the evangelical choices

By acquiring the ability to discern God's thinking, as expressed in His Word, we also learn to "decide according to God." Thus we choose or confirm or continue to renew our state of life.

We give the floor to Cardinal Martín: "If we carefully analyze the vocational options, we realize that they have, perhaps unconsciously, a process. Vocation, in fact, is a decision that is made on the basis of what God makes us feel and the experience that is made from there according to the evangelical parameters."

And not only do we choose our state of life for the building up of the Body of Christ, we are also called to take a stand in the midst of our society: political choices illuminated by evangelical preferences.

In this wave we see the prophetic courage of the Christian (see Acts 4:31), who by his choices places himself in the midst of society like a lamp that shines on high (see Mt 5:16) and, for the same reason, can also be criticized.

4. The wave of action: commitments

First is the tree, then come the fruits. Lectio Divina has avoided drawing immediate consequences from the "how this is applied", and works rather at the level of "being Christian". It is the well-known formula: "being precedes doing". But now comes the time to do. la Palabra

As Cardinal Martin says, action "is the ripe fruit of the whole journey..." Bible lesson and action are by no means two parallel lines."

James was clear on this point, we quote him in its entirety: "Do the Word and do not be content with hearing it... For if anyone is content to hear without putting it into practice, he is like one who contemplates his image in a mirror: he contemplates himself, but, going away, forgets what he is like. But he who attentively considers freedom perfect and stands firm, not as a forgetful hearer but as a fulfiller of it, he who practices it will be happy" (James 1:22-25).la Palabrala Ley

It's not always easy, as we know from experience. That is why we could always pray as a saint did: "But You, Lord, know the impossibility and inability I have to love You. Therefore, my God, give me, if You will, what You command me, then send me everything You want." (Juan Eudes).

5. The wave of communication: Evangelization

The light does not remain hidden. The brothers receive the witness of the Gospel from the lector-prayer. The Word that is proclaimed is in him in the first place, as a presence that is grasped in his way of life.

But Saint Paul says that "faith comes from preaching and preaching, through the word of God" (Rom. 9:17). it is fire that burns inside and that must also be announced out loud.La Palabra

Lectio is thus placed at the root of the mission. It is as if we are constantly being told: "listen so that you can announce it!"la Palabra

Finally, let's put it this way, this missionary wave expands slowly but irresistibly through all environments, at all times, giving history the taste of heaven. (See Matt. 28:19-20).

E. Three Difficulties to be overcome in the practice of Lectio Divina

We have presented the itinerary and the keys to move broadly within the Lectio Divina method of biblical reading. In several cases we have simply drawn the atmosphere, to hint at the possibilities.

But there are still three important questions to be explained for the praxis of the method, these are:

- Which texts to choose?
- When to do it?
- What can we rely on to grow?

1. Which texts to choose

It is best to always prefer the Word as He daily offers it in His life.

To begin with, we suggest always taking the Gospel, because He initiates us to the experience of Jesus and is the key to interpreting the whole Bible. On Sundays we will remember that we read in harmony with the Gospel.la Primera Lectura

However, the more advanced can gradually take up all the other books of the Bible. The Monks do the complete reading of the Monks. la Biblia.

It doesn't help much to change the Book of the Bible every day or choose the passages according to our liking. Continuity of reading increases comprehension, gives us literary context, and allows us to better grasp biblical pedagogy.

And when we come across a text that we consider difficult to understand, let us not fall into the temptation of changing it, the Fathers of the Church said that the most difficult passages are those that keep a greater secret. Patience.... little by little.

In the words of Deacon St. Ephrem:

"Give thanks for what you have received,
and do not grieve over the abundance that is left over.
What you have received is your share,
what is left over is your inheritance.
What I eat because of your weakness
you have not received at a certain time
You can receive it, on another occasion, if you persevere.
Don't make a greedy effort to take a sip
what cannot be sucked up all at once,
nor desist out of laziness from what can
only be taken little by little!
(Diatessaron).

2. Learning a rhythm

The masters of Lectio Divina agree that the most important thing in the praxis of Lectio Divina is not the amount of time spent each time but its continuity. It is a discipline!

The Lectio to which we can initially put a little more effort is that of the Sunday Gospel. It could even cover the entire week, looking for a day when the fruits of prayer can be shared with the closest brothers and sisters in the faith. This is what Latinos call colatio.

When you have learned this weekly rhythm, you can start the daily rhythm, which is the normal rhythm. This would be a concrete way of praying: "Give us this day our daily bread."

What is the best time? It is recommended to choose the best time of day: the one when the five senses are most awake, the one when it is possible to have a little calm and silence. Lectio forces us to make decisions with our ordinary time to give the best space to la Palabra.

But, we've already hinted at, there's no need to do it all at once. For example, (and just one example!): in the evening you can do the next day's Gospel reading. Then, we go to rest, taking with us the resonance of the Word, as a way of living the Words of the Song, "I was asleep, but my heart was watchful" (5:2). In the morning we gather the fruit in prayer. A master of says to the apprentices: "Spend fifteen minutes in this sentence, no more, no less!" Throughout the day we can bring it to its climax in a liturgical celebration.

3. A support to grow

We refer first of all to a spiritual companion. Together with him we can decide our concrete way of doing Lectio, share the difficulties that come our way, reap their fruits and ask for practical suggestions.

The experience of strong moments is also useful for walking fruitfully in the method of Lectio. For example: spiritual exercises, a day of prayer, some special meetings around , which constitute true formative experiences.la Palabra

Another support is participation in a small community in which we can share our experience and welcome the teachings of others with simplicity. In this community experience of Lectio we will learn from the brothers and from the wisdom of the Lectio of the Congregation of the Congregation of the Congregation of the Congregation.

We will then open ourselves to learning from this community experience.