**Lesson 7: Receive the Love of God Through Lectio Divina**

In the previous lesson, we focused on receiving the signs of God’s love that He so badly wishes to give us. But one of those signs is already given to us and lasts forever. It is Jesus Himself, The Word Made Flesh. He is the Word Himself found in the holy scriptures that center around Him and lead to Him. So a preeminent way of receiving the signs of God is *lectio divina*, which means divine reading. When we bring our life to Jesus, our works, joys, sufferings, requests, and challenges and recognize that he died for us and accompanies us on the journey, we become aware of his desire to teach us something, to speak to us quietly, to refine us, to purge us, and to enlighten us with new belief or resolve about something. We are ready to see His love in such teaching. Therefore, it is good to always have a bible or a passage of scripture ready whenever you make a holy hour.

Lectio divina consists of four parts that may be compared to stages of growth and harvest of grapes in a vineyard. In the *Lectio* portion, you toil in the “vineyard,” growing and harvesting the “grapes” by reading a passage of scripture (the daily Mass readings, for example). Pay special attention to each word and look for the connections between the sentences you are reading. Look for phrases that stand out to you.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Then this naturally moves us to *Meditatio*. In this portion, you work at squeezing the “grapes” for all the “juice” you can wring from them. One way to begin meditating on scripture is to choose just a few words or a phrase and begin committing it to memory by repeating the words over and over. As you do, you will tend to notice the words, their connections, their connotations, and their deeper meanings.[[2]](#endnote-2)

The next phase is *Oratio*. In *Oratio*, you “ferment the juice” and let it age into “fine wine” by pondering God’s word in your heart as Mary did, and talk the scriptures over with God. Ask God questions as you wrestle with the words and their meaning. Try to discover the depths of meaning that God put there. Why, for example, did he appear to the disciples on the road to Emmaus and ask, “What are you discussing as you walk along?” Or why did he seem to call the Canaanite woman a dog and then later commend her faith and answer her prayer? We can contemplate images also: “The Lord is my shepherd…”. Expect God to give you insight into both the scripture and its application to your life. Although this insight may not come immediately during your holy hour, remember to be open to His answer.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Finally, there is *Contemplatio*. The fruit of your labors with the “grapes” now yields “wine”. As God reveals Himself to us through the Scriptures, we begin to see that the truth of God is not merely a collection of facts, but the gift of a Lover to His beloved. This moves us to both gratitude and obedience. Indeed, we discover that our gratitude is meaningless without obedience. So we are moved from receiving the love of God to a new resolve to respond to it.[[4]](#endnote-4)

1. Mark P. Shea, “How to Make a Holy Hour”, (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.), pamphlet. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)