**Praying with Lectio Divina**

The most important foundation of this way of praying with Scripture is an understanding of the text's inspiration. When St. Paul declared that "all Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tm 3:16), he used the word theopneustos (God-breathed). The sacred text is written by the human hand, but "breathed" by God. God is the primary source of Scripture, and human writers are the instrumental source.

Thus, inspiration is not only a charism given by God to the biblical writers, but it is a continuing characteristic of the biblical text. The Bible is always inspired, so whenever we take it in our hands to read, we know that God's Spirit has been infused into the text. So the Holy Spirit within us leads us to listen, reflect, and understand deeply the inspired words given to us in Sacred Scripture.

***“Thus says the Lord: Just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to the one who sows, and bread to the one who eats so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; my word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.”*** Isaiah 55:10-11

1**. READ (lectio)**

**Open your mind and heart and slowly read (or listen to) a passage from Sacred Scripture. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?**

Because the Bible is the Word of God—"letters" from God to us—our first response must be **listening (lectio)**. We must attend carefully to the text, listening to it "with the ear of the heart," as recommended by St. Benedict (Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue).  If God is indeed speaking to us through the sacred text, then we must attend to the words with a sense of expectation and let go of our own agendas. No matter how many times we may have read the passage in the past, we can expect God to offer us some new wisdom every time we read. So we must listen to the text as if for the first time, paying attention to whatever God desires for us.

2. **REFLECT (Meditatio)**

 **Read it (or listen to it) again and reflect on what stands out to you.**

Listening to the inspired Word leads us to **reflection (meditatio)**. We want to understand the meaning of the text in the context of our lives. Because the Scriptures are Divine Revelation, they are far more than mere information. By reflecting and pondering the text, we allow the text to be an encounter with God, and we open ourselves to the deeper significance and the grace God desires for us.

Entering into this kind of meditation, we might try to place ourselves in the scene. We want to encounter God through the text with our whole selves: our minds, hearts, emotions, imaginations, and desires. Through this kind of reflection, we try to discern what God wants us to understand or experience through the sacred text.

3. **RESPOND (oratio)**

**Read it (or listen to it) again - What do you think God is saying to you, and what do you want to say to Him?**

After listening to and reflecting on God's Word, we naturally want to respond in **prayer (oratio)**. Our prayer arises in our hearts as a result of having encountered God in the biblical text. As in any true communication, we listen and respond, so that a dialogue is established between God and ourselves. As St. Ambrose said, "In lectio we listen to God, in oratio we speak to God."

Depending on what we have heard God say to us in our reflective reading, our prayers may be of praise, thanksgiving, lament, or repentance. And our prayers are increasingly enriched because they are continually nourished by the vocabulary, images, and sentiments of the sacred texts.

4. **REMAIN (contemplatio)**

**Reflect in silence and let the living Word of God remain with you throughout the day**.

Because our responses to God's Word are increasingly more personal relationships with God, our prayers then lead us to **contemplation (contemplatio)**, which is resting in the presence of God. As with any relationship, words and dialogue can be sustained only for so long. In the presence of God, our prayers lead to silence.

In this silent contemplation, we open our hearts to whatever God wants to do within us. Having been fed by God's Word, we are now transformed by God's grace in the ways God knows best. A humble receptivity on our part allows God to work his transforming will within us.

(Excerpted from an article by Stephen Binz – see link below)

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/prayer/adult-faith-formation-binz.cfm>