

Lectio Divina

Fr. Martin Martinez, OCD

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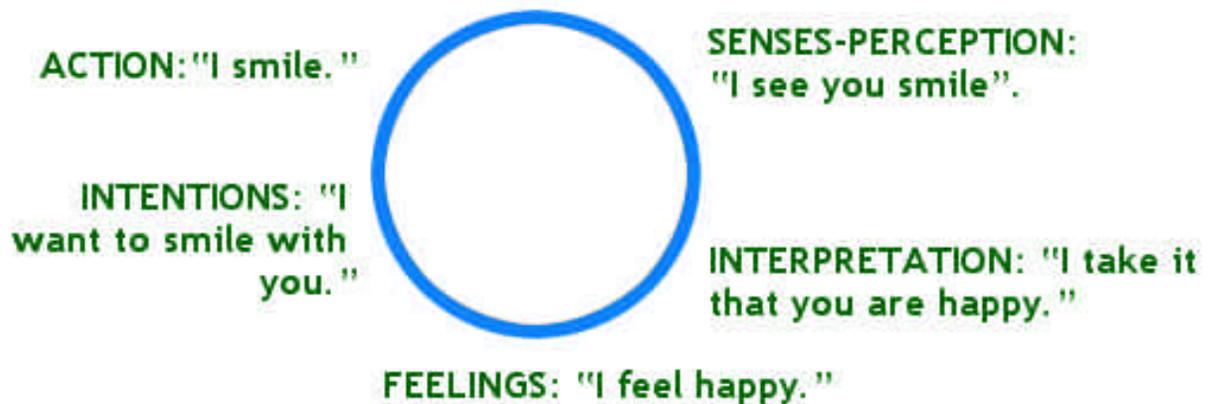
INTRODUCTION. THE RELATION BETWEEN MISTICAL EXPERIENCE AND THE WORD OF GOD ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS.

We ask ourselves here about the process that we ought to walk in order that our reading of the Bible may become a source of a mystical experience.

We recognize that the Christian is able to have in his present times, spiritual experiences and to be able to think about them, giving place to the so-called mystical science.

When we talk about a spiritual experience, what do we mean?

All human experiences have many elements that conform the *circle of consciousness*.



- **Senses**, situations that occurred: we may describe them as positive, negative or neutral.
- **Interpretation:** we read in a specific way those things that happen.
- **Feelings:** Then feelings come to us according to how we have read them.
- **Intentions:** What we want to do with that situation.
- **Actions:** The last element is what we do.

Where are we to place the spiritual element that makes any experience spiritual?

In order to transform any experience in spiritual, what we need is Faith. Faith is the way a Christian collaborates with God's will. It is not in the level of the facts, that happen, it is not in the level of space, that is if you are in the chapel or in spiritual affairs what makes the experience to become spiritual, because every thing that happens comes from God, "all is grace". The faith implies that in our moment of reading the situation, we ask ourselves, how is God present here? Faith takes us to open our minds to see things as God sees them.

The feelings that may come from that reading depend greatly on how we have read the situation. For example: Saint Therese of Lisieux received negative attitudes from a sister, and she reads them as an opportunity that God is given her to grow in patience. The feelings that come to her are very different if she would have read them without faith.

The intentions that follow depend on how we have been processing the situation that we have received from the reality.

We can't control the reality, the reactions of people, but we always have the opportunity of deciding what we are going to do with what God grants us in life. We can also make a stand to evaluate how we are reading things and where the intentions that we make, are taking us. In short what kind of person we are building.

Now we ask ourselves of the relation between a spiritual experience and what the Bible is saying to us.

-What can a spiritual experience give in relation to reading a passage of the Bible? And...

-What can the Bible give to our spiritual experiences? And finally

-What is the process that can take us to make our reading of the Bible a source of spiritual experience?

We are going to try and find some answers to these questions with the help of Saint John of the Cross. We will start by analyzing the

spiritual experience and pondering its relation to the reading of the Bible.

The spiritual experience and reflexion:

Gives in relation with Bible reading:

- A point of departure, a necessary Light to understand the Bible (SpC prol.n.3)
- The spiritual experiences proceed from the Holy Spirit, therefore they can put you in contact with the same Spirit that inspired the Bible: A person speaks bad in the midst of the Spirit if not spoken with a warm spirit (LFlame prol. 1).

It doesn't give:

- a certainty, it may deceive (AMtC prol. 2).
- a complete truth: Because a spiritual experience once put into words leaves many things unsaid, on the contrary the Holy Spirit uses in the Bible figures and similarities (SpC prol.1).
- a general experience and with it a complete certainty: we are dealing with personal and therefore partial experiences (LFlame 3,59).

The Bible:

The Bible contributes in relation to the spiritual experience:

- 1.- **Guarantee:** From the spiritual experience toward the Bible.
 - The personal experience gives the point of departure in a movement that searches in the reading of the Bible a guarantee.
- 2.- **Nourishment:** From the Bible toward the spiritual experience.
 - The reading of the Bible gives the nourishment to the spiritual experience thru the stories told.
- 3.- **A Confirmation**, that lays in the possibility of reaching a synthesis between the spiritual experience and the Bible: To the synthesis of the data given from the personal experiences and the Bible, Saint John of the Cross calls it: "guarantee, proof, clearness or confirmation" of the mystical experience.

We are not to expect from the Bible:

- a superior experience or compressed experience of multiple biblical characters.

- everything about God, because not even the Spirit can Express in human language the complete mystery of God. The Spirit of the Lord “that helps our infirmities” as Saint Paul says, dwelling in us, “maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered of what we can’t comprehend well nor understand in order to express it. Rom 8,9.26: (SpC prol. 1).

- And what he says is always less of what is in reality: all that can be said is so much less of what there is like what is painted in relation with what is living. (LFlame prol. 1). God for the present moment can only speak in everlasting silence and in silence should the soul hear it (Sayings 99).

The Synthesis:

1.- The movement from the spiritual experience toward the Bible, can reach a confirmation:

- **Guide:** The Bible has the role of guiding the safest way thru the difficult and obscure paths of the spiritual experience (Sp C prol).

- **Guarantee** in the things of God (SpC prol).

- **Confirmation, proof:** “I do not think to state something... that doesn’t go confirmed and declared with authorities of the Scripture. (Sp C prol.). It helps not to fail (AsMtCrm prol.).

- **Source of language:** The Bible can help to express a spiritual experience, of which there is always a “beyond” that only with great difficulty can somebody be able to understand and to communicate (SpC 7,9: cfr. Nn.9-10). Saint John of the Cross doesn’t find better words with which declare his experience of God and doctrine than the words of the Bible themselves (LFlame 1,21).

-**Imagery, resemblance, and above all poems.** The poetry seem to be the best resource of expression that best embraces the reality in its “wideness” (SpC prol. 2) and thus, the one that deforms it less and can better adapt to tell an experience that shall always be impossible to apprehend in its totality to the human mind.

2.- the movement from the Bible toward the personal experience, grants nourishment:

- **The possibility of contact and dialogue with the Holy Spirit,** because he speaks in the Bible (AsMtC prol).

- **The possibility of contact with the inspiration, frees us from being trapped by the letter:** It takes us to wide horizons. It takes us to consider the distance between what is painted and what is live

(LFlame prol). Because all that can be said is as less of what there is there, than what is painted from what is alive.

- **Source of experience:** To Saint John of the Cross the experience of God continues identical thru all history, thus he can assimilate the symbolic meanings of the biblical characters, identifying the same sorrows and joys, slavery to the desires, anxieties and falling in love, etc. The similitude with the biblical characters, born out of a constant meditation gives form to the mystical experience of Saint John of the Cross.

- **Source of doctrine:** The Bible can nourish the thoughts, when it has already nourished the experience. As a source of deep ideas, that can help us understand ourselves, our most inner life.

THE HISTORY OF LECTIO DIVINA.

The history of lectio divina of the Bible begins with the OT and NT itself. First it wasn't a reading that had a method, but it was practiced because the people had the idea that the word of God has always something to say to the present times, it was the tradition itself that was transmitted thru this practice of the people of God.

1. OLD TESTAMENT. In the OT, Israel prayed with the Word of God (cfr. Neh 8). The method consisted in the reading of the Bible, then it was explained and furthermore the people prayed with it in order to come one with God:

(Dt 30,14) " But the word is very nigh unto thee, (thru the reading) in thy mouth, and in thy heart (thru the meditation and prayer)that thou mayest do it." (thru the contemplation)

2. NEW TESTAMENT. Then this method passed to Christianity, even though the NT doesn't describe the method they used. But we can find this testimony of it (cfr. 2Tim 3,14-16) .

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is

profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

The first Christian communities read the Bible to nourish their faith, hope and love and in this way encouraged their path. Their reading was made from the faith in Jesus who said: "the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance" (John 14,26: 16,13). The NT is the result of the reading that the first Christians made of the OT, with the light of their problems and of the new revelation that God granted them of his Son thru his resurrection and his live presence in the community.

The practice of the spiritual reading of the Bible was made with the following goal: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."(Rom 15,4 KJV).

3. CHURCH FATHERS. All church father of orient (Origins) and the western world (Saint Geronimo, Saint Gregory Magnus, and Saint Bernard) practised the method of the lectio divina . The church fathers invited the Christians to do as well in their homes and gave them as a fruit their excellent commentaries of the Bible . To the church fathers it was a mean of salvation, a sublime "tabernacle" for the encounter with the beloved. The goal of the lectio was clear: The scripture helps for everything (it is useful to teach...) .

The expression of lectio divina comes from Origins (III a.C.) who points out the need to read with attention and assiduity. "Each new day, like Rebecca, we must turn to the fount of the Scripture".

"What cannot be achieved by our own effort (Reading and meditation), we must request it.

Because it is absolutely necessary to pray in order to comprehend the divine things (Prayer).

In this way we will come to experience what we hope for and meditate (Contemplation).

4. MONASTIC TIMES. Latter on the lectio divina appears in the monastic movement. The monks were born and organized around the Word of God heard, meditated and prayed with. From the lectio divina came to be, for example the Rule of Saint Benedict. The monks made the reading of the Bible the center of their lives in the deserts and monasteries. The Bible is placed within the ordinary life of the monks, with spiritual and ethical implications.

The on going reading of the Bible took the monks to assimilate, and from here is born the idea that the life of a monk can become word of God to his present times. This is the goal of the lectio divina, of the monastic life.

- In the life of **Saint Anthony** written by Atanasius, affirms that: "Anthony himself became word of God". Saint Anthony becomes the new Abraham that left his land and became a foreigner in the world. And he also becomes Abraham father of the monks.

- In the western world **Saint Benedict** is a constant reader of the Bible, to the point that he becomes filled with the spirit of all the just men. He becomes a new Moses that presents to the monks the Rule. It is not only a matter of reading the Bible but of becoming a word of the gospel to others.

- **Saint Gregory** says that the comprehension of the Word of God, is parallel to the 3 stages of man: child, teenager and maturity. In each stage the word tells us different things. There is an itinerary of comprehension of the text, which goes with the itinerary of transformation of the person in Christ. The comprehension of the Bible is proportional to the conversion; a renewed eye can see mayor things. In this way the text has an endless number of possibilities of meaning.

- **Saint Cassianus** declares that the more you progress in the understanding of the text the more you identify yourself with it, till you reach the same spiritual experience of the biblical writer. And you are able to express yourself with his same words. The Christian can rewrite in his life the psalms. Most of what is expected from the

reader is to shut down his passions, because the Spirit can't dwell in a heart that is filled with passions.

It was said that the mouth of the monks is sacred, because continuous was his speaking with God, and that the Bible was the voice of their prayer and mirror of their contemplation .

It's the point of departure to reach the contemplation and, has the ancients called it, a kiss of eternity that foretells the contemplation in heaven . The lectio divina isn't just only an exercise to reach contemplation, but contemplation in act at the very beginning.

The monk Guigo II in the XII century (near the year 1150) organized the 4 stairs in the lectio divina, in his book called "the ladder of the monks" (see also his Letter about the contemplative life). In the introduction, he addresses to the "dear brother Gervasio" and says: "In a certain day during the manual labor, when I was thinking about the activity of the human spirit, suddenly it came to my mind **a ladder of 4 spiritual steps:**

The contemplation.

The prayer and

The meditation,

The reading,

This is the ladder of the monks from which they go from earth to heaven. It's true, the ladder has a few steps, but it's height goes in the first step from the ground touching the earth, and the superior one touches the clouds and explores the secrets of the heavens".

Each step has it's own property of producing a specific effect en the reading of the Bible.

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The reading is the continuous study of the Scripture, made with a spirit of interest;

The meditation is a diligent activity of the mind, that with the help of the reason searches the knowledge of the hidden truth;

The prayer is a worshipful impulse of the heart toward God, asking to put away the evils and grant the goods;

The contemplation is a elevation of the mind above itself that, suspended in God can taste the happiness of the eternal sweetness.

5. MIDDLE AGES. In the lower middle ages there is a shift in the “divine reading”, that goes from reading the Bible to reassure the faith, to reading the Bible to respond to philosophical problems. The lectio turned into a theological-escolastical reading (a source of principals to respond to philosophical problems): it turned in the form of doing theology in the Church. It is in this moment when the prayer changes from being fed from the Bible to being fed from substitutive forms of devotions: thus, from being a biblical prayer that nourished the piety (pietas), passed to a prayer made out of practices of devotion (the devotio moderna) and the “Saint Ignatius meditation” of introspective character and psychological: from the 150 psalms we have a shift to 150 Hail Mary’s of the Rosary ...

6. MODERN TIMES. In our modern times the church has promoted the practice of the divine reading in two ways individual and communitarian.

First the *Instruction of the Pontifical Biblical Comision*, approved by the pope Pius XII, recommended the divine reading to all priests (De Scriptura Sacra, 1950; EB 592), to cultivate a “constant and effective love” for the Bible, source of interior life and apostolic success (EB 591 y 567) in the liturgy and in the theological discussions.

The Dei Verbum (n.25) invites “all faithful in Christ” to acquire “thru a frequent reading of the divine scripture the “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ” (Phlp 3,8). The document invites to nourish the spiritual life by listening to the word of God, which is strength for the faith, food for the soul and pure and everlasting source of spiritual life (DV 21). The document proposes several means for it. Along with individual readings, it suggests a group reading. The prayer must be accompanied by the Bible, because it is the response to the Word of God found in the Bible under the inspiration of the Spirit.

The recent document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, titled, the interpretation of the Bible in the Church (Vatican: Rome 1993), states: “we can only encourage the desire of a mayor knowledge of God and his design of salvation in Jesus Christ, thru the Scriptures”.

The divine reading reappears, in the Christian communities in which the lay people read the Bible and among them the religious life.

Therefore, when we practice the divine reading of the Bible we place ourselves as witnesses of a long tradition in the Church that begins in the origins of the Bible itself and that is nourished with the teachings of the church fathers and the monks in the deserts. In short we go back to our origins.

We pass now to the method of the divine reading.

THE METHOD OF LECTIO DIVINA.

1. Presuppositions of the divine reading.

The divine reading supposes present principals in the Christian reading of the Bible:

A. Unity of the Bible. The Bible has a unity, where each book, each phrase has it place and function to reveal the project of God. Its parts are as bricks of a great wall. This principal of unity of the Scripture helps us not to isolate the texts, taking them apart of their context and repeat them as isolated truths. A brick alone doesn't make a wall.

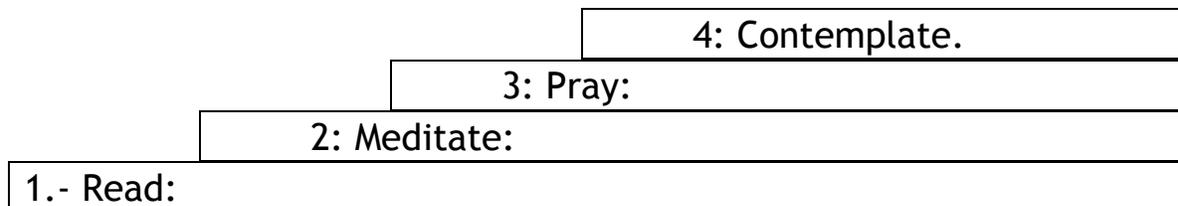
B. The actuality or incarnation of the Word of God. When Christians, read the Bible, we can't leave aside our own life, but we take it with us. Having our life in our sight, we discover in the Bible the image of which we can see our life and deepen in the heart of all things. We discover that the Word of God incarnates itself not only in the past, but also in our present times, in order to be with us and help us to cope with our problems and to live our hope that “we may listen to his voice today” (Psalm 95,7).

C. The faith in Jesus, living in our community. We read the Bible from our faith in Jesus, living among us. Jesus is the principal key of our bible reading. The faith in Jesus helps us to understand better

the Bible and the Bible helps us understand better the meaning of Jesus to our life. The community reading of the Bible, helps make the Bible, the Tradition and life that develop a living unity in our present life.

2. THE METHOD: THE FOUR STEPLADDERS.

The method is formed by 4 steps (attitudes) of the divine reading :



The 4 steps (grades or attitudes) of the divine reading are dynamic in nature, each step is born within the former and each one exists in the others. It's like the passing of night to day. In the hours of the dawn, some say: "it's still night", and others say "the day already arrived". The 4 attitudes exist and act together during all the process of the divine reading, but with a different intensity, according to the moment in which the person or community find itself.

A.- LECTIO "reading": What does the text say? , What was the authors intention thru this text?

The reading of the Bible gives us the contents for the meditation, so that it can have ground in the text in our reality. The reading should be able to give us elements to locate the situation and the message that there is in the biblical text and the situation and possible message to our present times.

How to read the text?:

- **Pronouncing well in a voice capable of being heard.** Rereading the text until you know well what is written. You can ask yourself simple questions, for example: Who is speaking? To whom? What is he saying? Why? When?

- **With the maximum of attention** (of the intelligence and of a heart that is pacified). According to the monks we have to fight against our passions that can make difficult the comprehension of the Bible. It is impossible to understand the Bible without peace and reconciliation, because if not our feelings will make us see only what we want to see. The danger here is to stress in a passionate way one part of the truth.

- **With the maximum of empathy with the text.** We put ourselves in the same channel with the Bible when we become accustomed to reading our life from the faith, from a commitment of following Jesus. When we change our interests with those of the will of God, with the commitment of living the charity. Cassinus used to express this idea in these words "The same experience acquired in life" helps our reading of the Bible. Pope Paul VI said that one must "try to reach a certain natural belonging between the interests of the present (today) and those of the text (yesterday), so that one can be available to listen (dialoguee)" (25.09.70). The person that lives in charity always understands the Bible, because the text was given to live in charity, even when the reading isn't "scientific" the person always understands it. Sometimes the divine reading doesn't always reach its goal, the text doesn't talk to us, not by a lack of study, but by a lack of a reading made with a deep faith of our present days, of our own personal experience here and now.

- **With daily perseverance, like a relation with a friend.**

One optional help is to read the notes of the Bible and the biblical commentaries. They can help us to understand the meaning that the biblical author wanted to give it. With this help our reading can gain in attention and impartiality, without us manipulating or reducing the text to the size of our own ideas.

The biblical study has 3 levels:

1) Literary: Helps us to see more closely the history within the text thru simple questions. , who is speaking? , to whom? , what does it say? , when? , how can we place this text in its wider context in the Bible?.

2) Historical: Helps us to see the history surrounding the text. To discover the conflicts that are in the origin of the text or that are presented in it. , to what problem or situation is it giving an answer?.

3) Theological: Helps us discover the message of the text to the people in their situation.

4) Contextual: Helps us to take in consideration the history of the text within the tradition. First within the Bible itself: within the Church and in relation with Christ.

From the commentaries, we should read sufficiently to answer these questions, and overcome the distance between the time of the text and ours.

The goal of reading is to grasp the meaning of the text, to contribute to the content to meditate, to begin the dialogue with God. The exegetical study of the bible is not an end but an aid.

One temptation in this moment is the so called fundamentalistic reading. This reading consists in wanting to make an interpretation word by word, pretending to be faithful to the Bible. It's a temptation because it's born from a desire of filling in a sense of security that takes you to make the letter of the Bible something complete in itself, like if it were the only manifestation of the word of God. It's like putting both eyes in the Bible.

The fundamentalistic reading considers the inspiration as if it were revelation. As if God had dictated word by word the books of the Bible. The revelation is direct from God, but the inspiration is mediated by the intentions of the biblical authors. In the inspiration the word of God, is incarnated, is mixed with the human word, it embraces it and gives it orientation. It's parallel to the action of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation of the Word of God in the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The fundamentalistic reading separates the text from the rest of the life and the history of the people of God. The value of the revelation isn't recognized in the present life. The work that the Word of God is doing in the present isn't taken in consideration.

It nourishes the moralism, individualism, and spiritualism in the interpretation of the Bible. It loses with it the liberating force of the Word of God. That is, to say the way the fundamentalistic reading of the Bible links the text with the present is thru seeing in

the text, only moral orders, that apply only to the individual or only spiritual ideas that do not take the person to assume his own personal history.

In order to overcome the fundamentalistic reading of the Bible the Church asks us:

- To consider the intention of the human author, and for that the literary forms.
- To consider the history of the text and the history presented in the text.
- To consider its relevance to our faith, hope and charity.

Which is the moment when you pass from the reading to the meditation?

It's difficult to say when the nature passes from spring to summer. But there are signs.

The goal of the reading is to understand the text, until the text becomes a mirror in which we see our own experiences. The reading must help us to get acquainted with the text to the point when it becomes our own word. Cassianus said: "filled by the same feelings that were in the text, we become, by a way of saying, in it's authors". What happens is that in a certain moment we become aware that God is trying to talk to us and tell us something. At this moment we bow down our head, in silence and open our ears: "I am going to listen to what the Lord is trying to tell me" (Psalm 85,9). It's at this moment when the heart dilates, when the reading transforms in meditation and we pass to the second staircase of the divine reading.

B. Meditatio: "meditation": "What does the text tell me, or us today?"

It's an exercise to make present the meaning of the text and bring it close to our personal life. It's a welcoming similar as:

- The mother that leaves space in her womb for the child in her interior.
- To the land in relation with the seed that without noticing how the seed develops roots.

- To the bee that not only gathers but also closes itself to become a warehouse that allows the pollen to transform.

The idea behind these resemblance is that of the welcoming (in silence, letting ourselves be touched, moved, and putting attention to what passages of our lives and of the Bible arise in us) and to let the word of God settle in our hearts. The monks read the Bible before going to sleep.

Thru the “lectio” reading we discover how the text is situated in its context, at that time what position did it take in the conflicts and what was the message that it had for them. Now in the meditation we pretend to discover what is what God wants to tell us today. Because we have the conviction that word of God always has something to tell us for today.

How to do the meditation? You can meditate in a rational or intuitive way.

a. Rational way: It’s made by asking questions, in order to enter in dialogue with the text and to bring it closer to our lives: , what is different and what is similar between the situation of the text and ours? Which were the conflicts of yesterday that exist even today? Which are different? What does the text want to transmit to us? What does the message of the text have to tell us today? In what point of our religious life does the text challenge us? What present situation is the text making reference to?

b. Intuitive way: to meditate the text by repeating it until we discover what it has to say to us, by looking at the experiences, ideas, feelings; what does it evoke in us, or what other texts does it takes us to. This is what the Blessed Virgin Mary did she kept all those things in her heart (Lk 2,19-51). And it’s what the psalm recommends to the just man: “meditate day and night the law of our Lord” (Psalm 1,2). Is what Isaiah defines with precision: “O LORD, the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.”(Is 26,8).

Regardless of the way we choose to meditate we should realize two tasks:

- After we have made the reading and having understood its meaning, its good to try and conserve it in a biblical phrase, in order to take it to our memory thru its repetition, and then take it from our mind to our heart.
- Pay attention not only to the contents, but also to the person that communicates the word. One word has value not only for what it says, but also for the person that says it and by the way he speaks it. In the meditation we ought to remember the person that speaks thru the Bible, God and the way He speaks, with everlasting love. A word of love strengthens, and awakens liberating energy that reassures a person.

In the meditation, God works thru his Holy Spirit. The meditation is done with the help from the Holy Spirit, because He communicates with us, he inspires, he puts in us the feelings of Jesus (Phlp 2,5): he helps us to discover the true meaning of Jesus's words (John 16,13); He makes us understand that without him, we can do nothing (John 15,5); He prays in us (Rom 8,26) and makes us grow in liberty (2Cor 3,17), "for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life"(2Cor 3,6). The Spirit works within the Bible (2Tim 3,16). In the past He encouraged the prophets; now He helps us to discover the prophetic meaning of our history. The meditation helps us to understand the spiritual meaning, the sense that the Spirit of the Lord wants to communicate to the Church today thru the text of the Bible.

The results of the Biblical meditation are the following:

- the opportunity to confront our preconceived ideas or personal image "I am like this and I will not change".
- It increases our self-knowledge, "in your light we find our light".
- Confrontation with rigid ideas "one thing is the theory but another is the reality" "well that is the ideal but the reality is very poor".
- It transforms us in a live expression of the word listened and meditated. Thus eliminates the distance between the life and the Bible. "instructed by what we ourselves feel, we no longer see the text as something that we just happen to hear, but as something that we have experienced and touched with our hands; not like a

strange and distant story, but as something that we give birth from the most inner part of our heart, as if they were feelings that form part of our being. We insist: it isn't the reading which makes us deepen in the meaning of the word, but our own experience, obtained by every day life" (Collationes X,11. Cassiano).

When is the moment when we pass from the meditation to the prayer?

The meditation helps us to make clear what God wants from us. When we have a better idea of what God wants from us, the question that comes is "what am I to say to Him? Do I welcome this request or gift? It's the moment of our plea to Him: "Arise Oh Lord help us, and redeem us for thy names sake"(Psalm 44,26). In other words the meditation is the seed of the prayer. It's just a matter of practicing the meditation and by itself it will transform into prayer.

C. Oratio: "prayer": What does the bible make me say to God?

The prayer attitude in front of the word of God has its model in the words of the Blessed Virgin Mary: "be it unto me according to thy word."(Lk 1,38). The Word that she heard was the word of God in the Bible, and in her life, by the visit of the angel. Mary was able to hear the word because she took it to her heart (Lk 2,19-51), because she had already purified her sight and her heart. The pure in heart are able to listen to what God is doing in their lives and in the Bible (Mt 5,8). Praying and singing (Lk 1,46-56) they incarnate the word in their lives.

This attitude of prayer ought to be real and sincere; it's achieved by the reading. It must arise from the experience of our lives and nothingness and of our real everyday problems, that's achieved by the meditation of the Bible. It tends to become a permanent attitude of life that leads to the contemplation.

The prayer can be spontaneous and diverse, depending on what has been heard by God in the reading and meditation, the answer in the prayer can be of worship, thanksgiving, request, asking of forgiveness, or even of confronting God as Job or Jeremiah.

The prayer also can be made out of the recitation of prayers already made. In this point the Divine Office is of great help. As long as the psalms that we choose are in relation with what we have meditated.

We can also express ourselves in a song to communicate what we want to say to God.

When is the moment to pass from the prayer to the contemplation? Here we have no answer. The contemplation is what remains in the eyes and in the heart, after the prayer is made. The contemplation is like the fruit of a tree; it was already in the seed, it then grows and matures.

D.- Contemplatio: “contemplation”. Taste, discern, act. Contemplation as a result of the “divine reading” is the attitude of someone who puts himself in the happening trying to discover and taste the creative and active presence of the Word of God and to see, how He sees our life and collaborate in the transforming process that the Word is doing within history.

It’s the result of the process of the divine reading, it is new light in our eyes that allow us to see and taste the word and to see the world in a different way, in Gods way. To see how God sees our person and life. This new sight is the contemplation, a new sight, a new flavor, a new action! The contemplation implies the whole human being.

The Divine reading opens the eyes of the blind, brings down the veil and helps us to discover God project within the history that we live. It helps us discover the meaning of things, and helps us to be committed to the kingdom of God.

Saint Agustin said that, thru the reading of the Bible, God grants us the sight of contemplation and helps us to decipher the world and to transform it, so that it can become once again a revelation of God.

The etymology of the word “contemplation” suggests that a person can become identified “with”= “con” that you are a place

"=templatio" inhabited by God. The person baptized takes conscience of the presence of Christ, who lives within his person and is space of God. Contemplation refers to the experience of the conformation in Christ.

The monk Guigo describes contemplation as a rich experience of sweetness that exists in the Word of God. In Contemplation, the experience of God suspends everything, makes everything lose density, and for an instance, anticipate some of the joy that "God has prepared for those who love him" (1Cor 2,9). "The reading brings forth the food to the mouth, the meditation chews it, the prayer savors its flavor and the contemplation is the sweetness that gives joy and recreates " (Guigo).

A text of Cassinus: "The deep understanding of the spiritual science will never be fruit of human science or of a secularized culture, but of a pure soul, by illumination of the Holy Spirit. If you want to achieve a true knowledge of the divine scriptures, search above all to acquire a firm humbleness of heart. This will conduct you, not to the science that inflates, but to the science that illuminates in the perfect charity. A person that isn't pure, will not be able to obtain the gift of the spiritual science... After you have driven away from you all preoccupations and human anxieties, make an effort with all your strength in dedicating yourself continuously in the reading of the Bible, so that this constant meditation may invade your soul and form her in its image. The reading then will make of your soul a new ark of allegiance, that keeps within the tables of stone, that is the eternal firmness of the two testaments. (Cassianus, Collatio XIV10; PL XKIX, 969 B-972 A).

Saint Benedict presents as an upright norm the Holy Scriptures: "We have written this Rule because practicing it in the monasteries demonstrates a certain honesty of costumes or a principal of monastic life. Furthermore for the person who wants to reach quickly the perfection of the monastic life, there are teachings of the Holy Fathers whose observance leads toward the highest degree of perfection. What page in effect or what official phrase of the Old and New Testament isn't now unrighteous for the life of men! Or

what book of the holy church fathers doesn't match with the invitation to go thru a straight road toward our Creator?

Furthermore, the conferences of our church and their institutions and their lives, and also the Rule of our father Basilius, are they not but instruments of virtue for the good and obedient monks? ” (Saint Benedict Rule 73).

The contemplation is the last step of the “Divine reading”. It's a starting point that converts into a new beginning, thru a process that is always being renewed by reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. Further on there will always be the capacity of a more deepens sight, of a reading more clear, of contemplation more transparent.

Collatio: The meditation can be made in community. When the community shares what each one feels, discovers and assimilates with the reading of the word of God. The search with others arises the ecclesial sense of the Bible and strengthens all who participate in an increase of faith. That is why it is so important that the Bible be read, meditated, studied and prayed in community. Because the Bible is the book of the church, of the community.

PEDAGOGY OF LECTIO DIVINA.

1. A GUIDE FOR DIVINE READING.

1.-Lectio: The reading tests our comprehension of the text with 2 questions: , what does the text say? And , what did the biblical author want to tell us with this text?

- Read in loud voice. Re-read the text until you understand very well what is written. With simple questions like: What went on in the text? who is talking?, to whom?, what does each one says?, when?, etc.
- Read the biblical notes and commentaries available, with the goal to understand the historical situation and the meaning of the text. We may ask: In what historical context was the text written? what is the answer to the problem? what is the message for us?. From the commentaries, we should read sufficiently enough to answer these

questions and overcome the distance between the time of the text and ours.

- We need to pay attention to what the monks practiced: silence-vigilance and fasting are necessary for the interior silence, which allows us to fight against our passions that may become a difficulty for achieving a good comprehension of the text. It's impossible to understand the Bible with a heart that doesn't have peace, that isn't reconciled with itself, because if not our previous comprehensions will make us see only what we want to see in the text.

2.- Meditatio: "pondering". What does the text tell me or our community? This is an exercise to find a present meaning of the text. Here is where we welcome in silence the bible letting it touch our ideas and feelings. In the meditation its important to remember the person who speaks is God, and the intention that He has with those words, our salvation, and the way he pronounces them, with his love.

A person can meditate in two different ways, rational or intuitive:

a • Rational way: By formulating questions, to enter in dialogue with the text and bring it to our lives: What is different and what the same between the situation of the text and ours? , Which are the conflicts of yesterday, that also exist today? , Which are different? , what does the text leads me to? , what is the message of the text for our present situation? , And for us discalced Carmelites in what point of our consecration does the text challenges us? , what present situation in our life is the text pointing out?.

b • Intuitive way: by repeating the text until we discover what it says to us, what experiences does it bring forth, what ideas, feelings, or other biblical texts.

After we have made the reading and once we have discovered its meaning it's good to try and put it in a biblical phrase, in order to take it to our memory thru its repetition and then from our mind to our heart.

3. Oratio: “prayer”. What does the text makes me want to say to God?

- Prayer is achieved by the reading and meditation of the Bible in relation to our lives.
- Prayer can be made in a spontaneous and varied way, depending of what we have heard from God in the reading and meditation; the answer can be of worship, thanksgiving, petition, or even calling out to God to clear a situation like Job or Jeremiah.
- Prayer can also be recitation of prayers or devotions. At this point the Divine Office can be of great help. Trying to put it in relation with what we have read and meditated.
- We can also sing or hear a song that can help us say what we want to tell God.

4.- Contemplatio: “contemplation”. To savor, to discern, to work.

- Contemplation is the result of the process of divine reading, it’s the attitude of a person that puts himself in the reality trying to discover, and to taste the divine presence of the active and creative force of the Word of God, and to see the reality as God’s sees it, and to try to cooperate with the process that the Word is already doing in our history.
- It’s the result that stays in our heart, it’s the new light in our eyes that allows us to feel the Word and to look in a new way, in the way of God.
- The etymology of the word “contemplatio” suggests that a person is identified with the Word “con”=with that the person itself is space “templatio”=temple inhabited by God. A great deal in the contemplation is that of awareness, awareness that we are baptized, that we are in Christ’s presence, living within us, and that we are space inhabited by God. Wherever we go we are Word of God, living pages of the Bible to our present times.

1 Bianchi, *Prier* 77.

2 Olguín, *Lectio* 4.

3 Bianchi, *Prier* 78.

4 Gargano, *Lectio*.

5 Olguín, *Lectio* 9.

6 Tamburrino, «*Dottrina*» 348. 349.

7 Magrassi, «*Lectio*» 469.

8 Bianchi, *Prier* 78; Gargano, *Lectio*.

9 Pontificia Comisión Bíblica, *La interpretación de la Biblia en la iglesia* (Ed Vaticano: Roma 1993) pp.114-115.

10 Cfr. Mesters, C., *La "lectio Divina" Lectura orante de la Biblia* en *La Palabra es vida* (ediciones Palabra) Año 28 Nu. 11 Noviembre 1990.