

SACRED READING (Lectio Divina)

Benedictine Prayer is a method of prayer that goes back to the fourth and fifth centuries to the time of the Desert Fathers. The method uses "sacred reading" as the base and "becomes a ladder of escalation or intensification of prayer with four steps: reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

1. Reading (Lectio)

- uses the psychological function of the senses
- has a special appeal to the SJ temperament within each of us
- by means of the senses we study and search the Scriptures and other spiritual writings for the direction and guidance we need for daily life
- although God's truth is found primarily in the Scriptures, God reveals His will and presence in other books, nature, people, history, and divine providence also

2. Meditation (Meditatio)

- calls for the use of the psychological function of thinking (intellect) to reflect (study, analyze) upon the insights received in Lectio
- reflection upon the insights culled from spiritual reading provides answers for the NT (seeking) temperament
- may choose to use exegetical tools at this stage (Bible dictionary, word studies, commentaries, etc.)
- must go beyond analysis of the reading to the personalizing of the message received in the reading either by transposition or projection: in transposition I "imagine the words being spoken directly to me" and through projection "we put ourselves back into the biblical situation and try to imagine that we are present as the words or events first occurred and then try to draw some practical fruit from this experience"
- choose to welcome the Word of God into your life as the living word and presence of God
- as we ruminate upon the truth as a cow does upon its cud we discover the beauty of God's word and apply it to daily life.

3. Prayer (Oratio)

- this calls forth the feeling function within which personalizes new insights through a personal dialogue with God
- has a special appeal to the NF and SP temperaments
- in this step we dialogue with the Lord by responding personally to the Lord's speaking through the reading
- this intimate dialogue with God, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, activates feelings of love, joy, gratitude, sorrow, repentance, desire, enthusiasm, conviction, and commitment, which are verbalized through spontaneous prayers of love, thanksgiving, sorrow, dedication, and petition
- here we decide what changes we will make in order to incorporate the word of God into our heart and thus make our vows to God
- various kinds of prayer are appropriate here: "Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, and Supplication" (ACTS)
- true prayer is listening to God, and then responding to God's words

4. Contemplation

- calls forth one's intuition in order to integrate the experience of the previous three steps
- during this time of quiet (stillness) one is open to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit which may find expression in new insights, new perceptions, new infusions of grace, peace, joy, and love
- this is a time for stillness, listening, openness, to whatever the Lord may desire to impart

- the NF temperament views this step as the entrance to the deeper levels of contemplative prayer
 - when distractions come one simply recalls the theme of the reading, and then returns to the inner posture of openness to whatever new perceptions come from the Lord
 - images may emerge from the depth of our subconscious and interact with the biblical images in the reading
 - our prayer is for a deepening union with Christ, and an increase of the fruit of the Spirit within us
- (see Michael and Norrissey, Prayer and Temperament)

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Text:

Date:

Step 1: Reading (Lectio)

Step 2: Meditation (Meditatio)

Step 3: Prayer (Oratio)

Step 4: Contemplation (Contemplatio)