

## ***Lectio Divina: Divine Reading for Difficult Times***

### **Reading 3**

As we navigate difficult and challenging times, and we are unable to attend Church services, we offer some divine reading passages and guidance for following an ancient approach to contemplating passages from Scripture. Below, we will offer a text for you to follow this week.

We follow guidance from a wonderful little book entitled *Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina*, by Thelma Hall.

This exercise can be carried out alone, or with others.

There are four steps to the *Lectio Divina* exercise:

- 1: *Lectio* – Reading and listening to the Word of God.
- 2: *Meditatio* – Reflecting on the word.
- 3: *Oratio* – The Word touches the heart.
- 4: *Contemplatio* – Entering the Silence “Too Deep for Words.”

Thelma Hall writes, “I prepare for this sacred reading by taking time to quiet my body and mind.” Take time to find a comfortable and favoured place to sit. Perhaps go through a few minutes of being conscious of your breathing.

Next, read the scripture passage with your full attention. This is step 1: *Lectio* – Reading and listening to the Word of God. Just read and re-read enough to take it all in.

Now, it’s time for *Meditatio* – Reflecting on the word. Perhaps think of fully seeing and understanding the passage for the very first time; even if you have read the passage before. You may find that a specific word or phrase seems to stand out from the rest of the passage. Take time to wonder why.

Thirdly, turn to *Oratio* – The Word touches the heart. Let the words tell you why you must listen to these words at this specific time. This is a ‘settling down’ moment where you can take as much time as you need to fully *be* with the words. You may wish to ask yourself, “Why is God focussing me on these specific words?”

Finally, turn to *Contemplatio* – Entering the Silence “Too Deep for Words.” Think of this as new beginning rather than the end of the process. Take time to imagine hearing these words for the very first time in terms of the depth of their guidance to you. God is taking over. Sit still. Do nothing for a little while.

With all this in mind, here are a couple of passages for you to take on in your *Lectio Divina* exercise this week:

**Isaiah 58:1** "Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins. <sup>2</sup> For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. <sup>3</sup> 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?' "Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. <sup>4</sup> Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. <sup>5</sup> Is this the kind of fast I have

chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? <sup>6</sup> "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? <sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? <sup>8</sup> Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. <sup>9</sup> Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, <sup>10</sup> and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. <sup>11</sup> The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. <sup>12</sup> Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. (Isa 58:1 NIV)

**Psalm 42:1** As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. <sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? <sup>3</sup> My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" <sup>4</sup> These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. <sup>5</sup> Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and <sup>6</sup> my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon--from Mount Mizar. <sup>7</sup> Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. <sup>8</sup> By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me-- a prayer to the God of my life. <sup>9</sup> I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" <sup>10</sup> My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?" <sup>11</sup> Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God. (Psa 42:1 NIV)

In Christ, The Reverend Sue-Ann Ward

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