

Imago Formation Community⁶

January 25-26, 2020

Below you will find our general schedule for what the weekend will look like. Our hope is that by knowing the rhythm of the weekend, you can experience it with less stress and be present through each movement. We try to balance both order and flexibility.

Saturday, January 25

Noon-2pm	Check-in at the Chiara Center
2:00pm	Teaching: "Various Approaches to Scripture" - Bryan
3:00pm	Discussion: "Facing our issues with the Bible" - Vicky
4:00pm	Rest
5:30pm	Gathering Prayer - <i>St. Francis of Assisi Church</i>
6:00pm	Dinner
7:00pm	Open space
8:00pm	Night Prayer - <i>St. Francis of Assisi Church</i> (enter into Great Silence)

Sunday, January 26

7:30am	Silent Breakfast
8:00am	Morning Prayer - <i>St. Francis of Assisi Church</i>
9:00am	Practicing <i>Lectio Divina: Romans 12</i>
10:00am	Group Spiritual Direction
11:30am	Communion Service - <i>St. Francis of Assisi Church</i>

Teach me to stop and listen,
Teach me to center down,
Teach me the use of silence,
Teach me where peace is found.
Teach me to hear your calling.
Teach me to search your word,
Teach me to hear in silence,
Things I have never heard.
Teach me to be collected,
Teach me to be in tune.
Teach me to be directed,
Silence will end so soon.
Then when it's time for moving,
Grant it that I may bring,
To every day and moment
Peace from a silent spring.

- Ken Medema

“The scripture is one of the primary channels through which God encounters us in our grasping, controlling, manipulative mode of existence. The scripture is one of the focal means whereby God awakens us to the dynamics and possibilities of a new way of being.”

- M. Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word*

“I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.
I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.
Praise be to you, Lord; teach me your decrees.
With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.
I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.
I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.”

- Psalm 119:10-16

Various Approaches to Scripture

The Bible has been used in a variety of useful ways throughout the centuries, (and some un-useful ways). Here are a few helpful practices and definitions.

Memorization - committing to memory selected verses and passages of scripture as a way to let the stories and truths marinate in our heart/mind/soul.

Reading Plans - setting concrete goals of regular Bible reading as a way to get broad exposure and overview of scripture.

Study - taking a closer look at shorter passages of scripture utilizing commentaries, concordances, cultural/historical resources, and other study helps to catch the nuances of a passage and the ways it connects to other aspects of scripture.

Meditation - savoring a passage of scripture and reflectively reading it in an unhurried manner, often done in a posture of openness and receptivity.

Lectio Divina - a form of meditative reading that highlights what scripture evokes in us as we read, providing a structure that assists the reader in turning those noticings into prayer.

The Spiritual Exercises - an Ignatian/Jesuit approach to praying through the life of Jesus as revealed in scripture that is typically structured over 9 months.

Lectionary - a 3-year cycle of selected scripture readings (covering most of the Bible over that time) that many Christians and denominations around the world use as a basis for service planning, to aid in devotional reading, and to give them a diverse exposure to the arc of the biblical narrative.

Daily Office - a devotional practice and rhythm that weaves together prayer and daily lectionary passages of scripture.

Different translations - some Bible translations are intentionally more paraphrased and flowery (The Message, NLT,), some are very choppy by trying to be more precise (NASB) and some fall in the middle of that spectrum (NIV, NRSV). Some enjoy meditating on the same passage but in 2-4 versions.

How I Have Experienced the Bible

Each of us has had a different set of experiences when it comes to the Bible, and that's ok. Some of us have had formal training or lots of exposure to the Bible, while others of us don't even know where to begin. Regardless of where you're coming from, we hope you'll find new, life-giving ways to engage with God through the written Word. Time has shown that this sacred text has much to show us about God, about ourselves, and about how people have been relating with God throughout the centuries.

How was the Bible used in your faith tradition?

Think about times in your life where you were excited about the Bible? What was exciting about your engagement with it?

Think about times where you've been frustrated with the Bible. List some of your frustrations.

If someone asked you today to describe your current relationship to the Bible, what would you say?

What do you desire when you spend time with scripture?

Maybe your old lens of reading the Bible is not as useful as it once was, or maybe your practice of reading is feeling dull. Is there some work you need to do - reading? conversations? - in regard to your relationship with the Bible?

Would you like to try out one of the new approaches to the scriptures this quarter? If so, which one seems interesting? What practical logistics might be good to consider to make your experimenting more successful? (setting a goal and telling a friend about it, waking up early, doing some research, etc)

Exploring *Lectio Divina*

“The word of Scripture should never stop sounding in your ears and working in you all day long, just like the words of someone you love. And just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love, but accept them as they are said to you accept the Word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart as Mary did. That is all...do not ask ‘How shall I pass this on?’ but ‘What does it say to me?’ Then ponder this word long into your heart until it has gone right into you and taken possession of you.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

Lectio Divina (translated “divine [or sacred] reading”) is an approach to the Scriptures that sets us up to listen for the word of God spoken to us in this present moment. It’s an ancient practice of scripture reading that dates back to the early mothers and fathers of the Christian faith. Referring both to the material being read and also to the method itself, the practice of *lectio divina* is rooted in the belief that through the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures are indeed alive and active as we engage them for spiritual transformation. (Heb. 4:12)

Lectio involves a slower, more reflective reading of Scripture that helps us to be open to God’s initiative rather than being subject to human agendas—our own or someone else’s. Through a delicate balance of silence and word, we enter into the rhythm of speaking and listening which is at the heart of intimate communication. A time of silence before the reading helps us to quiet our inner chaos so that we are prepared to listen. Moments of silence throughout the process help us be attentive to God when He

does speak and creates space for noticing our own inner dynamics and exploring them in God's presence.

Ruth Haley Barton speaks about this approach to Scripture, saying:

"When we engage the Scriptures for spiritual transformation, we engage not only our mind but also our heart, our emotions, our body, our curiosity, our imagination, and our will. We open ourselves to a deeper level of understanding and insight that grows out of and leads us deeper into our personal relationship with the One behind the text. It is in this context of relational intimacy that real life change takes place."

Traditionally, there are 4 movements to *Lectio Divina* - *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*. For this exploration, we will incorporate two additional movements; *silencio* (to begin) and *incarnatio* (to conclude).

Prepare (*Silencio*)

Take a couple of minutes and quiet your soul. Get comfortable, breathe deeply and bring yourself fully to this moment. Become aware of God's presence with you. You may use your breath prayer or some other simple prayer to invite God's presence ("Come Lord Jesus," or "Here I am.") Express your willingness to hear from God through your meditation upon Scripture. Imagine God looking at you with eyes full of love.

"Our spiritual life will be no deeper than our capacity to pay attention. And our capacity to pay attention to God will be no greater than our capacity for and practice of paying attention to that which is within and beyond our self in the present moment."

David Benner, *Opening to God*

Read (*Lectio*)

Turn to the passage and start to read slowly. Pause between phrases and sentences. You may read silently but it may be helpful to read the passage out loud, allowing the words to echo and resonate. Read the passage as many times as you like, paying special attention to the word or phrase that seems to resonate most deeply with you. Sit silently with this word or phrase. At this point don't try to understand why, just sit with it, savor it, repeating it, letting it resonate in you.

“Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.”

I Samuel 3:9

Reflect (*Meditatio*)

Continue to read the passage with your particular word or phrase in mind. Listen for the ways this word or phrase seem to intersect with your life right now. Ask yourself, “What in my life needs to hear this word right now?”

If you are meditating upon a story, ask yourself, “What character am I connecting with in this story?” Or consider the ways the details of the story seem to connect with your current story.

Respond (*Oratio*)

Read the passage again, listening for your own deepest and truest response. In the silence following this reading allow yourself to spontaneously respond to God as truthfully as you can without censoring your reaction. This is the threshold for dialogue with God, *“sharing with God the feelings the text has aroused in [you], feelings such as love, joy, sorrow, anger, repentance, desire, need, conviction, consecration. In this part of the process, we pour out our hearts in complete honesty, especially as the text has probed aspects of our being and doing in the midst of various issues and relationships.”* (Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*, p. 114).

Let the conversation unfold as a conversation between two people who love and care for each other. Pay attention to any way that God might be inviting you to act in response to the word you have heard. When doing *lectio* privately, you may also choose to journal your response at this point. Maybe a poem, drawing, concrete commitment, or written prayer seems like a fitting response. Our group may take a 5-10 minute break to allow for optional wandering.

Rest (*Contemplatio*)

Read the passage one final time, returning to a place of rest with God. You’ve engaged with God honestly, intimately and this is a place of waiting and resting in God’s presence (Psalm 131). Thank God for spending this time with you.

When our response has played out in all its fury, angst, or exuberance, we come to a place of rest in God. Here there are no expectations, demands, no need to know, no desire but to be in the Divine Presence, receptive to what God desires to do with us.
Marjorie Thompson, *Soulfeast*

Resolve (*Incarnatio*)

We carry this word with us into our day, and sometimes it carries us. Pondering on it, with curiosity and gratitude, we don't force anything. Though, we are open to its influence on our heart and soul. It may need to be shared with others, or it may be ours alone. It may inform daily decisions that need to be made, or it may simply be something to hold for now. As we move through our day, we may find that its meaning to us grows deeper and deeper.

The movements of *Lectio* are intended to help us move toward wholeness and integration, though they can be done in a fluid, imprecise manner as you experiment.

<i>Silencio</i>	Preparation for spiritual reading Inner shift from control to receptivity from information to formation from observation to obedience
<i>Lectio</i>	Reading/receiving Nurtures "sensing" dynamic
<i>Meditatio</i>	Processing Nurtures "thinking" dynamic
<i>Oratio</i>	Response to God from the heart Nurtures "feeling" dynamic
<i>Contemplatio</i>	Yielding and waiting upon God Nurtures "intuitive" dynamic
<i>Incarnatio</i>	Living out the text in our lives

Notes/thoughts:

Romans 12

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—God's good, pleasing and perfect will.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be

lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Reflecting on *Lectio Divina*

Don't feel like you have to answer these questions. Rather they are provided as a way to reflect on your experience of *Lectio*. In time, these questions will be unnecessary, but especially as you first encounter this way of interacting with Scripture, reflecting on the experience will be helpful to your journey.

- What was different about this interaction with Scripture than your “normal” interactions? How did you experience God in *lectio divina*?
- Where did you feel yourself resisting or pulling back? (It's important to notice this inner dynamic without judging yourself for it) Where did you sense deep resonance or peace?

- Which movement was most meaningful to you? What movement was most challenging?
- What do your reactions tell you about where you're at right now? How do these reactions shed light on your attitude, your relating patterns, your perspective, your behaviors? How does it feel to consider these things in God's presence?
- Is there a word or image that you can carry with you to remind you of this experience? How might you savor and continue to "chew on" this passage?
- How might you make *lectio* more of a regular practice in your life?

Reflection Questions

The following questions may be helpful to your small group time:

- What did you notice about resonance and resistance in your readings, thoughts and discussions regarding prayer? What did and didn't resonate?
- Describe practices you chose to explore relative to prayer.
- Obviously, in the period between retreats, other stuff happens in our lives. How did you continue to pursue God in the flotsam and jetsam of daily life? How have you continued to nurture silence, stillness, and solitude?

Group Companioning Guide

The purpose of spiritual companioning is to help each other notice, pay attention and respond to the work, presence and activity of God in our lives.

This format will feel a little bit stifling at first. But, we follow it in order to respect everyone in the group - to make sure that everyone has time to share. The facilitator's job is to keep things moving. Before you begin, select a timekeeper who will give people a 1 minute warning to wrap up.

Opening Silence - 3 minutes

Facilitator closes silence with "Come Holy Spirit"

Beginning with the person to the left of the facilitator, each person will be given 8 minutes to share without interruption. Feel free to talk about anything that God is doing in you this retreat. Or, you can use the following questions as a guide:

- Silence** - 1 minute. In this silence we sit with what the person has shared. We thank God for this person, for their journey and for what God is doing in them today.

Simple Prayer - 1 minute. The person to the right of the one who just shared will offer a simple prayer, reiterating their desires and intents. Affirm them and their journey in God's presence and commit them and their journey to God.

Facilitator - “Thanks be to God.”

Closing Prayer - When everyone has shared, join hands and pray this prayer together:

All RECEIVE THIS PRAYER AS A SIGN OF OUR TRUST IN YOU.
SAVE US FROM ALL EVIL, KEEP US FROM HARM, AND GUIDE US
IN YOUR WAY. WE BELONG TO YOU, LORD.

Facilitator Protect us by the power of your name,
In Jesus Christ, we pray.

All

AMEN

When Departing the Room, discontinue discussion of the issues shared, trusting each other's journeys to God. Commit yourselves to intercede for one another as you are apart.

Remember to receive each person's sharing with quiet reverence. What's said in your group should stay in the room.

Over the Next 3 Months:

Required Reading: (pick one)

- *Shaped by the Word: the power of Scripture in spiritual formation* -
M. Robert Mulholland Jr.
- *How the Bible Actually Works*
Peter Enns

Recommended Reading:

- *Eat this Book: a conversation in the art of spiritual reading* - Eugene Peterson
- *Inspired* - Rachel Held Evans
- *Opening to God: lectio divina and life as prayer* - David Benner
- *The Blue Parakeet: rethinking how you read the Bible* - Scot McKnight
- *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time: taking the Bible Seriously but not literally* - Marcus J. Borg

Practices

Experiment with using the *lectio* method on your own or with a group.

Experiment with one of the other approaches to Scripture that you haven't tried before, and write about it in your next paper.

Community

Sometime near the midpoint of this next quarter, meet with Vicky or a spiritual director to process how this experience is going for you. We're honored to be your companions along this wonderful journey.

Continue conversations that have started here. Meet monthly with someone from this community or get your small group together to talk specifically about your practices of silence and solitude. Consider having your group meet for lunch on the Saturday or Sunday of the next retreat.

Writing

Before the next retreat, write a 1 page reflection on the past quarter. If you have space reflect on your times of silence/stillness/solitude as well as the reading.

Email your paper to Vicky at viclyn2000@gmail.com