

## On the method of bible reading known as Lectio Divina as composed by the desert monk John Cassian (5<sup>th</sup> C) and developed by St Benedict (6<sup>th</sup> C)

The common ground between the Celtic tradition and Cassian's teaching is the belief that God speaks from deep within all that is human as opposed to over against it. There is a confidence instead of a suspicion around the practice of listening within ourselves for the truth of God, for deeper than any confusion or darkness in us is the light that enlightens every person.

What Cassian learned from the early monasticism of Egypt and then relayed to Western monasticism was a 'method of keeping our hearts still'. The belief was that if our minds and hearts could be still and free from distraction we would hear intimations of the Word that was in the beginning and through whom all things have come into being. This was similar to the Celtic conviction, based on the mysticism of St John, that our lives and the life of creation are essentially utterances or expressions of God. This means that in looking to hear the Word of God we are not to be looking away from life but rather to its heart. It meant in practice the expectation that God speaks not from some religious fringe but from deep within our lives and all life.

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**Lectio** (reading or rather listening): recalling scripture and almost *listening to it being spoken within ourselves*, to the point of the sacred text becoming our own, so we recall passages and allow them to give voice to what is deepest and truest for us.



*Luminescence, Kudrieshev*

**Meditatio** (repetition) : *allow a single word, phrase or image from the passage to capture the attention of our heart*. It is a simple repetition of a Scripture phrase, silently repeating again and again in our hearts, as a way of being attentive to God at a level deeper than discursive thought. It is about being filled with a sense of the presence of God, and of his love. Given that 'the sacred words stir memories within us' the repetition of these words from Scripture is intended to *evoke memories* of our experiences of God's grace.

**Oratio**: prayer uttered or spoken from the heart. It is an expression of our heart's desires, both for ourselves and for others. *Desire will emerge and out from that expressions of prayer can be uttered.*

### Some Scriptures

#### **What shall I do, Lord?**

My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. "What shall I do, Lord?" I asked. " 'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'"  
(Acts 22:9-11, Paul on road to Damascus)

#### **Not I, but Christ: Discovering the I AM in one's own soul.**

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20)