

Homily for the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Last week in the homily, we were talking about hearing from God – about really having the opportunity to hear the Lord speak personally to each of us through the very Word of God, that is, the Sacred Scriptures. As I shared, the Bible is not just a well-written book from a long time ago. It's actually the inerrant, inspired words that the Holy Spirit Himself inspired the authors to write down. Therefore, those words are as applicable to us today as they were thousands of years ago because God is unchanging.

Because of this truth, the Bible has a special place in our lives as Christians. Not only does it express tenants of our faith for belief, but it also contains the power for us to be transformed by God so that we can grow more mature in the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

But, how do we access this power? I mean sometimes we can't even figure out what's going on in a Scripture passage, let alone have it touch us in a transformative way! Like the first reading today from the Old Testament of Wisdom – most of us probably just heard those words fly by! And so, I mentioned last week that we have to slow things down, and intentionally let God engage us with His Word, so that He can draw us deeper into relationship with Him. In our Catholic tradition, an excellent way of doing this is through *lectio divina*. *Lectio divina* is a Latin phrase which means “divine reading”. And it's an ancient practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote our communion with God.

Now, the reason I'm talking about this all again this week is because this past Tuesday night at *Following Christ*, what was the topic? "Hearing God in Scripture". I kid you not! And the presenter talked about lectio divina! And I had no idea this was the topic when I gave my homily just a few days before. We call this a "confirming sign", and God got my attention loud and clear!

So, this week, I wanted to walk through with you a lectio divina that I did a few days ago on our first reading – you know, the one from Wisdom that I said just flew by, perhaps without us really understand what it said. 'Cause that kind of happened to me when I read it myself. I said, "Now what's this saying?" So, I slowed down and read it again, and realized that the gift of the Holy Spirit we call "wisdom" is tremendously necessary for us to live balanced, well-ordered lives. In the reading, I read the word "prudence", and I thought, "I kind of know what that means, but let me look it up." And, when I did, I learned that prudence is a virtue that is concerned with helping us distinguish between what is good for us to do from what is not. In other words, God's wisdom gives us prudence to guide us to make the right decisions in life according to His perfect will for us. And that's the first step of lectio divina – just reading a short passage of Scripture to figure out what's going on – what it means.

Then, I moved in to the second step – meditation. I went back to read today’s reading one more time, and found that one particular phrase was standing out to me – “For taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence, and whoever for her sake keeps vigil shall quickly be free from care...” I prayerfully considered what was personally speaking to me in that phrase. And then it dawned on me that wisdom, which here works in our lives through prudence, is meant to keep us full of peace and free from anxiety. Because, if I comprehend that God wants me to choose the good and see what is truly important in life, then I won’t be so quick to worry about the other stuff. I’ll actually be focusing on the good. For example, the thought of all the bad in the world had come into my mind. But, I quickly realized that God’s goodness is so much more powerful and operative in so many ways. And then that’s what I chose to focus on.

This very naturally led me to the next step, which is simply called prayer. I started thanking God for how good He is, and for loving me so much, and for His grace which always sustains me in my need. I thanked Him that I am not alone --- that He is right there to help me when I stop to call that to mind – just like I was doing in this spur-of-the-moment lectio divina.

Finally, I then found this quiet silence kind of fall over me. And from within, I heard God's still small voice tell me how much He loves me, and that it's because He loves me perfectly that He only wants the good for me in life. This personal experience of God's love for me was a moment of intimate revelation. It was also the fourth and final step, contemplation – just letting God transform me by this insight which He just gave me. And this, then, brought me into deeper relationship with God.

So you see, lectio divina is simple to do – you don't even have to mechanically go through all four steps. And it's a very helpful way to bring the power of God's Word into your life. My homily from last week (and this one too) are on the parish website to help you bring this wonderful method of praying with Scripture into your prayer with the Lord. God bless you.