Read!...

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Now open the Bible and read the text. Never open if at random. The Word of God deserves to be eaten whole, not nibbled at casually. Follow the cycle of readings in the lectionary with an open mind, accepting whatever passage the Church offers you. Or else read a book of the Bible from beginning to end, in a sequential reading, a *lectio cursiva*.

Following either the lectionary or the sequence of a biblical book is essential if a faithful, daily reading of texts is to have continuity. This will also help you avoid falling into a subjectivism which chooses only the passages which you like or which merely fill your emotional needs. This is an iron principle to which you must remain faithful.

You may choose a book or one of the readings from the daily lectionary because the Church recommends it for a particular liturgical season. Do not jump around from text to text: *one passage, one episode, a few small verses are more then enough!* And if you do your *lectio* based on the Sunday readings, remember that the first reading (the First Testament) and the third reading (the Gospel) are parallels and you will benefit from praying over both together. The lectionary for feasts is a great gift, put together by people who are very spiritually astute. The daily lectionary is unfortunately more fragmented. If this causes you difficulty, it will be better for you to do a *sequential reading* of a single biblical book.

Read the text more thon once. Read it many times and even out loud. If you have some knowledge of the original languages, Hebrew or Greek, read that version. Otherwise be content with a good translation.
Always try ta use the Septuagint and Vulgate versions, if your educational level is up ta it. These are favored translations, which the Church has venerated over the centuries.

If the passage you wish to pray over is so familiar to you that it repeats itself in your memory automatically or too fast, don't be afraid to resort to methods which will slow you down and help you to get beneath the surface connections. Write the text out. Make several copies! A friend of mine, a monk who is also an exegete of international repute, once told me in confidence that when he does *lectio divina*, he recopies the text again and again to see what differences may exist between what is *in his memory* and what is *actually written*. Don't read only with your eyes, but by careful attention try to print the text on your heart.

Also read the parallel passages indicated by the marginal notes. These are a great help, especially if you are using the Jerusalem Bible. Broaden the passage, stretch it by placing other passages which deal with the same message alongside the reading of the day. Remember, the Word interprets itself. *'Scripture is the interpreter of Scripture'*. This is the great rabbinic and patristic criterion for *lectio divina*.

Let your reading become listening (audire), and let your listening become obeying (oboedire). Slow down! It is necessary *to relax (vacare) with the readings*, because they are made to be listened to. *Then the Word will make itself heard!* In the beginning was the Word, not the Book, as in Islam! God speaks in *lectio*. Our reading is our means of listening to God. 'Hear, O Israel!' - this is God's constant call. It resounds in the text and echoes from the text out towards you.

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