# Meditate!...

Print
Print

e work, make some effort at attentive and deep reflection on the reading...

What does it mean, to meditate? This is not always easy to say. Certainly, *it means to deepen the message you have read and to find out what God wants to communicate to you*. You must do some work, make some effort at attentive and deep reflection on the reading. In times past, when many Christians could learn the Scriptures only by memorizing them, reflection was actually made easier by repeating the words in their hearts. You too must dedicate yourself to reflecting on the readings, using contemporary methods in proportion to your intellectual gifts and education.

Although it is always true that we learn 'not by booklearning but by the Spirit's presence, not knowledge, but insight, not just words on paper but love *(non eruditione sed unctionae, non scientia sed conscientia, non carta sed caritate),* this is not a slogan which justifies undisciplined or sporadic reading, or reading which ignores the rigors of serious biblical research and the many modern aids we have to help us understand the texts. Why not turn to the commentaries of the Church Fathers on the various books of Scripture? There are many good translations of them. A concordance is also a great help in the task of commenting on Scripture with Scripture. There are also modern exegetical studies and spiritual commentaries.

---

You can evaluate the relative quality of many of these works for yourself. Some of them merely pretend to be serious spirituality, while in reality they contain nothing but personal opinions or eccentric interpretations which square with neither the texts nor tradition. Above all, avoid commentaries which advertise themselves as 'new applications of the Word', but really exploit the Word for their own purposes. Exercise some caution even with the spiritual commentaries you find in both the ferial and the festive lectionaries. Sometimes these interpretations of the texts are a little forced and reflect the personality and words of the writers more thon they do the Word of God.

'Listening is not just passively receiving a given text. It also consists in the believer's effort to penetrate the text, to get to the bottom of the divine Word and find its unequivocal meaning. It is related to working diligently and tenaciously to apply the Word to one's life', says Origen.

All these exegetical, patristic and spiritual commentaries are certainly useful tools for meditation and for our personal growth in understanding. Yet in *lectio divina* what is important is that our effort be personal. It need not necessarily be private. All effort is more fruitful within the daily, lived experience of a community, a brotherhood or sisterhood, for it is in relationship to others that one truly becomes a disciple of the Word. In community, the Word is not just read together but lived and experienced together.

Personal effort will search out the spiritual point of the text. This is not the same as getting hooked on the phrase that inspires the greatest feelings of personal guilt. The central message is always best synchronized with the mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection. Work at getting at that spiritual sense, the sense which is consistent in Scripture, the spiritual sense which is basic to both the Fathers and modern exegetes. In commenting on Scripture with Scripture, you can seek what the Lord is saying to you.

Don't expect to find only what you already know. What complacency! Don't expect necessarily to find something to please you or ease some situation in your life. This is giving into subjectivism. Not all texts are completely understandable right away! Try a little humility and recognize that so far you've understood little or even nothing at all, and you'll come to a greater understanding later on. This is another form of obedience: if you admit that you still need to be milk-fed, you won't expect to be nibbling on solid food (cf. 1 Cor 3:2; Heb 5:12).

When you get to the point of understanding a little of it, chew over the words in your heart (the rumination recommended by the Fathers). Then apply them to yourself and to your life-situation, without getting lost in psychologism or introspection, and without getting locked into an examination of conscience. God is speaking to you. Think about God, not about yourself! Don't let yourself get paralyzed by a scrupulous analysis of your own shortcomings and limitations while the divine Word is demanding your attention.

The Word will discern the state of your heart, judge you and convict you of sin, but remember that God is greater than your conscience (cf. 1 Jn 3:20). When God wounds your heart this way, he always does it with truth and mercy.

Instead of thinking about yourself, stand in awe of the One who is speaking to your heart and of the food which is being offered to you - sometimes a lot, sometimes a little, but always good nourishment. Be amazed that you are welcoming the Word into your heart here and now, without having to travel to the heavens or beyond the seas to find it (cf. Dt 30:11-14). Let yourself be drawn by the Word and transformed into the image of the Son of God, without your even knowing

how. The Word which you have received is your life, your joy, your peace and your salvation. God is speaking to you. You need to listen in amazement. Like the Hebrews who witnessed the great works of the Exodus, and like Mary who sang: 'God has done great things in me, holy is his name' (Lk 1:49), you too should be marveling! God is revealing himself to you. The face of your Beloved, the unspeakable Name of God. Open your heart in welcome! This is the time for faith! God is teaching you directly to model your life on the life of the Son. God is giving himself to you in the Word. Welcome God as you would embrace and hold the infant Christ. God is giving you a holy kiss, being wed to you as Lover and Beloved. Let your heart celebrate the One who is Love, stronger than death, stronger than *sheol*, stronger than your sins. God is giving birth to you as logos, as word, as child. Meditation, rumination should lead you to this: to become a dwelling-place for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Your heart is a sanctuary. Your whole persan is a temple. This is the theandric reality: the mystery of the divine in the human.

From: ENZO BIANCHI, *Praying the Word, An Introduction to «Lectio Divina»*
Cistercian Publication, Kalamazoo 1998, pp. 95-97.