

The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church Burien, Washington

November 2017

From Fr. John:

LECTIO DIVINA: DIVINE READING

“From Easter to the first of October, . . . [from the fourth hour until the time of Sext, they will devote themselves to reading. But after Sext and their meal, they may rest on their beds in complete silence; should a brother wish to read privately, let him do so, but without disturbing the others. From the first of October to the beginning of Lent, the brothers ought to devote themselves to reading until the end of the second hour. . . . [A]fter their meal they will devote themselves to their reading or to the psalms. During the days of Lent, they should be free in the morning to read until the third hour. . . . During this time of Lent each one is to receive a book from the library, and is to read the whole of it straight through. These books are to be distributed at the beginning of Lent.” **Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 48**

Lectio divina, an ancient art once practiced by many Christians, is a technique of slow, contemplative reading that enables a deeper union with God. Typically, the readings are from scripture, but any spiritually nourishing work will suffice. The practice is one of the precious treasures and defining characteristics of Benedictine monastics, together with the daily liturgy and manual labor.

Lectio divina is based on the practice of listening deeply, to hear as St. Benedict wrote, "with the ear of our hearts" for the still, small voice of God; the "faint murmuring sound" that is God's voice touching our hearts. Consequently, our attunement to the presence of God in scripture requires that we first become still and silent in heart, mind and body. This is also the reason for the difference in the pace of reading from what we use when we are reading for other purposes.

The technique has four basic steps. In the first step, *lectio*, we read slowly, attentively, gently listening to hear a word or phrase that is God's word for us this day. Once a word or a passage speaks to us in a personal way, we "ruminate" on it. Consider the example of Mary in Luke's Gospel "pondering in her heart" what she saw and heard of Christ. In the second step, *meditatio*, we take in the word and allow it to interact with us. The third step is *oratio* is prayer understood both as dialogue with God and as the offering of ourselves to God. Here we allow that which has touched our hearts and upon which we have pondered to merge with our deepest selves. The last step is *contemplatio* in which we simply rest in the presence of God. In this wordless, quiet rest we return to the silence that began our session.

(continued on page two)

(continued from page one)

If you think of practice and contemplation as the two poles of our underlying, on-going spiritual rhythm and you will see the gentle oscillation back and forth between spiritual "activity" and "receptivity" that *lectio divina* establishes.

The direction of our practice is not outward in the offering good works, but inward into the depths of the soul where the Spirit is constantly transforming us. Our activity in this sense is seeing who we truly are and allowing ourselves to be remade into what God intends us to become. In contemplation, we move without moving from spiritual doing to learning simply to be, that is, to exist in the presence of our loving God. Contemplation isn't a goal to be achieved through some method, but is a recurring gift from of grace to be simply accepted with gratitude.

This approach to reading is to get information, to answer questions or to expand our knowledge. We have to suspend "goal-oriented" habits to practice *lectio divina*, because there is no goal beyond being with God who is always, already present. The amount of time we spend in any stage depends on the Spirit, not on us, although twenty minutes to half an hour is a good start for beginners.

To practice *lectio divina*, get into a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent. Some people focus for a few moments on their breathing; others have a beloved prayer word or phrase they gently recite, while still others use centering prayer to become interiorly silent. Use whatever is best for you, but allow yourself to steep in the silence for a few moments.

READ (LECTIO): Turn to the text you have selected and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow says, "I am for you today." Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. In *lectio divina* God is teaching us to listen, to seek in silence. The Holy One does not reach out and grab us; rather, God softly, gently invites us ever more deeply into God's presence.

RUMINATE (MEDITATIO): Take the word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories and ideas. Do not be afraid of "distractions." Memories, emotions, sensations or thoughts are simply parts of yourself which, when they rise up during *lectio divina*, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. This stage can be gentle movements or a bit of a rock tumbler. Allow this inner pondering, whatever the dynamics, to move you into dialogue with God.

(continued on page four)

This Old House of God....Building Update

The Parish Hall and kitchen continue to be posted on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) commercial leasing site. If you know anyone that is interested in leasing the space, please have them contact Tony Hettler.

Completed Work –

A new hybrid electric water heater has been installed that will service the Zechariah kitchen, church and classroom level restrooms.

The roof top ventilation fan which services the Sunday school and upper level Men's restrooms has been installed.

Work in progress –

We are finally finishing the cement sidewalk and asphalt work that is required because of the winter flooding/drainage work. We are working with contractors to get an estimate and schedule. Sections of the driveway and walkways will be closed off during the work. This work has been put on hold due to funding issues.

If Seattle City Light has agreed with the proposal to install LED lighting in the sanctuary and it will significantly lower our electric bill. Seattle City light will pay for approximately 80% of the costs.

The hallway and doors going to the Sunday school classrooms are going to be painted. Funding for this is coming from an individual donation.

(continued on page four)

The Elizabethan

The Elizabethan is published monthly by St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church. The deadline for articles is the fourth Friday of each month.

Articles, calendar items and ideas may be mailed or emailed to the addresses below or left in *The Elizabethan* box in the Parish Office.

St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church

Street 1005 SW 152nd Street

Address: Burien, WA 98166

Mailing PO Box 66579

Address: Burien, WA 98166

Phone: (206) 243-6844

Email: info@stelizburien.comcastbiz.net

Website: www.stelizabethburien.org



Rector: Father John Forman

Sr. Warden: Sue Tierney

Jr. Warden: Carolyn Terry

Treasurer: Linda Knutson

Office Administrator: Christine Ramirez

Elizabethan Editor: Christine Ramirez

(continued from page two)

PRAY (ORATIO): Speak to God. Whether you use words or ideas, feelings or images or all four is not important. Interact with God as you would with one whom you know loves and accepts you. You may be offering questions without asking for answers or you may be offering to God any discoveries you have made during your *meditatio*. Consider the word or phrase that you have been given as a means of blessing, transforming the ideas or memories that your pondering has awakened. Give to God whatever you have found within your heart.

CONTEMPLATE (CONTEMPLATIO): Finally, simply rest in God's embrace. And when God invites you to return to your pondering of the given word or to your inner dialogue with God, feel free to do so or to set the impulse aside. Learn to use words or images when words or images are helpful, and to let go of them when they no longer are necessary. Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you in both spiritual activity and inner receptivity.

Sometimes, in *lectio divina*, you will return several times to the printed text, either to savor the literary context of the word or phrase that God has given, or to seek a new word or phrase to ponder. At other times only a single word or phrase will fill the whole time you have set aside. It is not necessary to anxiously assess the quality of your *lectio divina* as if you were performing. Remember, *lectio divina* has no goal. The practice is not for productivity and is more like poetry than prose. The practice is never truly complete because there is no beginning and no end!

This ancient spiritual art allows scripture to be what it was intended to be: a means of uniting us to God. Through it we also discover our own underlying spiritual rhythm and we experience the God who truly loves us. And we ultimately discover that there is no place in our hearts, no interior corner or closet that cannot be opened and offered to God.

(I am indebted to Fr. Luke Dysinger of St. Andrews Abbey, New Melleray Abbey's Monastic Primer and St. Meinrad's Benedictine Oblate Companion as the sources of this essay.)

The west-side of the building has damaged siding due to flickers. Flicker bird houses have been purchased and need to be installed. The holes need to be repaired as we have dry rot.

Columbarium gutters need to be replaced & painted before we have water damage.

This work has been put on hold due to funding issues.

The west office windows need to be re-glazed. This is a safety issue that needs to be addressed.

The plans for long-term maintenance of the building and grounds need to be addressed. If you have a desire to share your talents, please contact Carolyn Terry.

Linda Knutson

St. Elizabeth's Food Cupboard is well used and our neighbors that use it are grateful for it's availability. If you are inclined to contribute items, here is a list of things that are needed:

Canned vegetables, soups, canned fruit, toilet paper, paper towels, toothpaste, cereal, peanut butter, bag beans, rice, condiments, any kind of canned meat, top ramen, mac & cheese, cereal, baby wipes, diapers, baby food and soap of any kind.



Being cheerful keeps you healthy. It is slow death to be gloomy all the time.

Proverbs 17:22

Be on the alert; stand firm in faith; be valiant be strong. Let everything you do be done in love.

I Corinthians 16: 13, 14

The Elizabethan

St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church

PO Box 66579

Burien, Washington 98166-0579



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED