

lectio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio

lectio

"You have a book? Then read it, reflect on what it says and apply the words to yourself." [Theophan, *Art of Prayer*]

"About reading, I would not read too much... I think you should form the habit of pondering more over what you read, just a very little bit, "keeping it in your heart", asking Jesus to show you how *you* are to understand it, how it applies to *you*, but not trying to "cover ground." [Anonymous, *Letter to a Spiritual Child*]

"In connection with your reading, here is something that may prove useful: you still have the habit of mind, it seems to me, which is always looking for something outside itself, as though you were saying, "if only I understood this, if only I understood that, everything would be fine!" But that is false. What is fine, just as it ought to be, is just the understanding you have at this very moment, because that is just what the Father has send you, and He knows what you need. It is just like a tiny infant asleep on its mother's breast, breathing its love with every breath, because it knows it is being loved, save and secure in its mother's arms. There is a certain spirit of perfect contentment, which I think you should cultivate, and it comes from the realization that God is perfectly pleased with you, infinitely more than that mother looking down with joy into her infant's eyes. You have everything , everything you could possibly need as you are in the arms of Mary. Do not be afraid of your sins and your temptations, do not even think of them, just "My beloved to me, and I to my Beloved Who feeds among the lilies." Did you ever wonder why He feeds among the lilies: The reason is because the lilies "toil not, neither do they spin; yet Solomon in all his glory was not clad as one of these." Because the beauty of the soul is in receiving everything from the Father in Jesus, as "Mary has chosen the best part, which will not be taken away from her." [Anonymous, *Letter to a Spiritual Child*]

meditatio

"To apply the content to oneself is the purpose and fruit of reading. If you read without applying what is read to yourself, nothing good will come of it, and even harm may result. Theories will accumulate in the head, leading you to criticize others instead of improving your own life. So have ears and hear." [Theophan, *Art of Prayer*, p. 130]

"-In order to believe and, as disciples, to follow Jesus of Nazareth—the Son of God, the Lord, the Messiah, the Redeemer of the human race—we must first come to know him by continual meditation on Holy Scripture, and especially on the Gospel, where he speaks to us in the first present to present us with his personality, his message, his claims, his miracles, his passion, death and resurrection—that is, "the mystery of his identity." [Pope JPII, *Agenda for the Third Millennium*, p. 34]

"Meditation teaches us what it is that we lack, and prayer obtains it. Meditation shows us the way, and prayer makes us walk therein. Finally, meditation lets us know that dangers which threaten us, and prayer makes us avoid them by the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ." [St. Bernard of Clairvaux]

oratio

"The principle fruit of prayer is not warmth and sweetness, but fear of God and contrition." [Theophan, *Art of Prayer*, p. 131]

"If you really wish to follow Christ, if you want your love for him to grow and last, you must be *diligent in prayer*. This is the key to the vitality of your life in Christ. Without prayer, your faith and your love will die. If you are constant in daily prayer and in attendance at Sunday Mass, your love for Jesus will grow. And your heart will know such joy and deep peace as the world could never give you....

Nourish your day with as much prayer as you can and allowing for moments of particular intimacy with the Lord, whether individually or in a group. Only prolonged contact with him can transform each of us inwardly into a disciple of his. Only by being nourished by long hours of prayer, meditation, concentration and silent listening to God, will a believer be able to speak to other people about the Divine Mystery, to hand it on and to bear witness to it in the presence of others.

The Gospel reminds us of 'the need to prayer continually and never lose heart' (Luke 18:1). So every day, devote a little while to conversing with God, as proof of the fact that you sincerely love him; for love always seeks to be close to the beloved. This is why prayer must come before everything else. People who do not take this view, who do not put this into practice, cannot plead the excuse of being short of time; what they are short of is love." [Pope JP II, *Agenda for the Third Millennium*, p. 74f]

"Prayer is in its essence the union of the soul with God. Its effects and fruits are: a pure soul, collection of inner forces, reconciliation with God, tears, forgiveness of sins, a bridge which leads us above and over temptation, a wall of protection against sorrows. It is the work of angels, a food for all spiritual beings, the joy of eternity, a divine action, a source of virtues, a treasury of graces; it is spiritual progress, the food of the soul, revelation, the exclusion of faintheartedness, a prop for our confidence, a comfort in grief." [St. John Climacus]

"In prayer come empty, do nothing." [St. John of the Cross]

contemplatio

"The more the heart of man is expanded by love of God and of his neighbor, and the more his meditations, his fervent prayers, his just aspirations, his humility, and his generosity have opened his soul to grace -- the more elevated and greater is the grace that God the all-powerful will bestow upon him. And indeed, in the measure that a man seeks to conserve this grace and use it for the praise of God and the common

welfare, in the same measure will he receive a more abundant infusion of grace in this world and of glory in Paradise." [St. Thomas, *The Ways of God*, p. 37f]

"Man achieves the fullness of prayer not when he expresses himself, but when he lets God be most fully present in prayer. The history of mystical prayer in the East and West attests to this: St. Francis, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Ignatius of Loyola, and in the East, for example, St. Serafim of Sarov and many others. [Pope JPII, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, p.18]

"Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee. In his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps, in the vale of tears, in the pace which he hath set. Since beatitude is nothing other than the enjoyment of the supreme good, and this supreme good is above us, no one can attain beatitude unless he rises about himself, not in body but in heart. Yet we cannot rise about ourselves unless a superior power lifts us up. No matter how well we plan our spiritual progress, nothing comes of it unless divine assistance intervenes. And divine assistance is there for those who seek it humbly and devoutly, who sigh for it in this vale of tears by fervent prayer. Prayer, then, is the mother and the beginning of the ascent. [St. Bonaventure, *Mystical Opuscula I*, p. 9]