

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR SACRED READING

- Start by collecting yourself with a moment of silence or brief prayer.
- Read the selected passage slowly and attentively, and if possible aloud. The passage should be brief enough to take in as a whole, ideally no more than a paragraph, but even as short as a sentence or two.
- Pause for a moment, and then read the same passage a second time.
- Following the movement of your spirit allow yourself to be drawn to a sentence or phrase or even a single word that engages your interest.
- If in a group, gently speak aloud the sentence, phrase, or word you were drawn to.
- The important movement at this stage is your willingness to trust that as you open to the passage in a deep listening and receptive way, something will be calling to you, and that you follow that lead.
- Unlike the term meditation that usually implies an emptying or focused practice, at this stage of meditation you quietly allow your faculties—including your reason, imagination, memory, and emotions—to begin to work with the passage.
- Whatever catches your attention, stay with it. Engage your imagination, perhaps visualizing the scene, or even imagine yourself role-playing a particular character in the reading.
- This is the time to allow the text to reach and resonate with the authority of your own heart.
- You may notice an arising sense of grace or thanksgiving, or sadness, grief or other emotions. Allow these responses from your heart-to-heart encounter with the sacred words to be present and acknowledged.

- If you are so moved, you can shape your experience into an inner prayer of sorts, even if the prayer is not formed into specific words but more a felt sense of relating to Loving-Presence.

## Contemplation

- At this stage, you simply sit and “rest in Loving-Presence.”
- You may find yourself drifting back to the prior step of prayer, which is fine, or perhaps your experience opens to a more still or empty spaciousness.
- Nothing needs to be rejected or excluded in this experience of contemplation.
- Many groups or individuals naturally flow from this stage into a period of Centering Prayer, or pre-determine an amount of time to sit together in silence or meditation.

*\* Adapted from chapter 13, Lectio Divina, from Wisdom Jesus by Cynthia Bourgeault*