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Q&A with Fr. Carl J. Arico Archive

On or related to Lectio Divina

Q: I have been advised to NOT do Centering Prayer in conjunction with Lectio Divina. Individually and in a group setting I have practiced doing Lectio immediately before Centering Prayer and found that often the CP time was enriched by the preceding Lectio. Conversely, I have done CP and then Lectio and found that Lectio was enhanced. This is not surprising since both tend to open us to God's presence and thus the second of the two seems likely to be deeper given our readiness bestowed by the first. So, why is there a recommendation to not combine these practices?

A: You have your finger on the pulse of both prayer practices. They support one another. They are two different prayer practices but they dance together. Centering Prayer helps us let go of over-conceptualization, hyperactivity and over-dependence on self. This means that when we experience Lectio Divina we are more open to take in some new thoughts, move to different action and rely more on God. Lectio Divina reminds us that our Centering Prayer is relational and we are entering into a deeper relation with our God who is already deeply in love with us. Usually when our prayer groups gather, they do Centering Prayer first and then Lectio Divina. We have found that when Lectio Divina is done first, when it comes to the fourth step of resting, many do not stay with the word and allow it to penetrate more deeply, but move into Centering Prayer - to me this interrupts the conversation. - Fr. Carl.

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Q: On Mt: 28 1-10 ... It seemed like such a powerful experience, the way it is portrayed in these verses. How could those women even begin to understand what it was that they were seeing? Being a woman myself, it causes me to feel a

little proud that Christ chose women to bring the message to the others. I just have a hard time in Lectio to get beyond the feeling that it is just too much for ordinary human beings to understand. I don't feel that I can grasp it and it is 2,000 years later, when our perspective should be much clearer. Where am I wrong? I'm suddenly feeling a little lost in the enormity of it. What was so easy to understand in earlier years, I now feel like it is escaping me. Easter is here! I don't want to miss the wonder of it with these self doubts? I think that may be what I'm seeing, but am not sure.

A: You have intuited the awesomeness of the event in your being. I took some time to read the Scripture scholar Raymond Brown in this regard. Through all the events leading up to the resurrection they faithfully were present - in silence - bringing the greatest gift one can give in the time of tragedy - being lovingly and faithfully present. Here they were especially regarded - no longer standing off in the distance but here in the intimacy of the event. Brown says, "Now they were rewarded for their initiative in coming to see the sepulcher by being made the first human proclaimers of the resurrection and the intermediaries through whom the faith of the disciples will be rekindled ... imitate (the women) in receiving and sharing the news of the risen Lord ... go quickly with reverential fear (awe) and great joy to tell others." There is much more that could be said. In your Lectio prayer, celebrate the joy of hearing the women giving you the good news, and like the holy women, experience the gift of human affection for Jesus as they did. May we all do likewise. - Fr. Carl.

[The book referred to is by Raymond E Brown, *A Risen Christ in Eastertime*, The Liturgical Press, 1990, pp 30-31.]

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Q: What did Jesus mean when He said to the thief on the cross, "Today, you will be with me in paradise"?

A: There are many ways in which you can hear and understand this statement. It seems to me that at that moment of conversion this person - who perhaps never experienced the presence of God - experienced it in Jesus. His eyes and heart were open and Jesus could sense it not only in his answer, but in the man's whole being. The good thief was transformed interiorly and Jesus, sensing this, said (paraphrasing), "You have finally found the reason for your existence. From this moment on you are with me in Paradise. Your life's purpose has been fulfilled."

If you continue to practice Lectio Divina on your own with this passage, you are sure to hear your own understandings of it. The Spirit will speak to you personally if you consent and open in this way. There are many, many levels of meanings in Scripture available through the contemplative dimension. - Fr. Carl.

