

## *Selection from Chapter 16. Structure and Spirituality of the Movement*

*Lectio in the Movement Today, pp. 327-329*

The experience of *lectio* as a foundation has led to certain practices in the Movement which are now commonplace. In the first place it is around *lectio* of the word of scripture that all the Manquehue communities, of whatever degree of commitment, are formed. They meet weekly to read and meditate and pray on the word.

Then also it is normal in the communities and among individuals in the Movement to read carefully the gospel of the day every day, seeking its meaning here and now for each one individually. Through these daily readings their individual search is linked to the daily liturgy of the church. They also use brief *lectio* regularly at the beginning of any task or meeting - consciously following St Benedict's recommendation in the Prologue that everything should start with prayer:

This, then, is the beginning of my advice: make prayer the first step in anything worthwhile that you attempt. Persevere and do not weaken in that prayer. Pray with confidence, because God, in his love and forgiveness, has counted us as his own sons and daughters<sup>1</sup>.

In following this advice they may use the gospel of the day before a meeting or class or conference, or they may use some other text, or they may open the Bible at random to inspire a moment of prayer. In whatever way it is done, it is an expression of faith in the presence of Christ in the word as taught by Vatican II, reviving at the same time an ancient monastic practice in the ordinary lay life of today. It may indeed be seen as modeled ultimately on what Christ did in the synagogue at Nazareth<sup>1</sup>. The text of the word leads to a brief reflection, meditation or prayer which serves to bring the work to be done into the presence of the Lord. This practice is an ordinary, every-day habit.

In their use of *lectio* there is a strong awareness in the Movement also of the traditional progression of *lectio – meditation – prayer – contemplation*. However any such analytic scheme can easily become rigid and involve an attempt to 'manage' our prayer, as we may manage our diet and its results. If that happens inspiration is obscured by method which is disastrous. It is of the very nature of the prayer that comes from *lectio* that there is no question of such management. When prayer comes alive and we are held by it, it is spontaneous and not at our command since it is recognized as given entirely by the gift of God.

In everything to do with *lectio* this for the Movement is a golden rule to remember. It is for us to open our hearts to God through the word and to accept whatever he sends us. That it should be a matter primarily of heart and not of intellect and that the 'opening' and the 'accepting' should be the whole of our contribution – that is the very essence of the prayer and meditation which is his gift to us through *lectio*.

As to contemplation – that is the ultimate gift which is not at all amenable to 'management' or the effects of special training or method or formation processes. It is a gift and the only preparation for it is fidelity. Learning to wait patiently on the word during *lectio* and not force a response and fit it into any pre-arranged concepts – that is a better preparation for contemplation than any man-contrived regime – whether physical or spiritual or both. In the psalms our part is well expressed in a way we should remember: "Be still – and know that I am God"<sup>1</sup>. "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him"<sup>1</sup> Turning to the word of God in *lectio* is an adventure

which only begins effectively with the utter abandonment from the beginning of self-centered expectations and human contrivance.