

Companions IN PRAYER



Sisters of St. Clare
Saginaw, MI

Lectio Divina

Many of you have shared your needs and prayers with us asking that we be your companions in prayer. In this newsletter I'd like to tell you how we bring your cares and concerns to our prayer.

As you know there are many ways to pray. As Catholics we treasure the liturgy of the Mass where we hear the scriptures, homilies, and traditional prayers. However, our Church also has other ancient ways of knowing and praying. The classical spiritual practice of Lectio Divina, which literally means "holy listening," is a certain way of reading and listening to scripture for God's word for us. One does it by choosing a scripture, reading it four times, and in doing so coming to rest in God. It is a way of prayer, of spending time with God. I will give you my personal experience of how I practice Lectio Divina.

As I prepare to spend time with God, I go to my room and close the door. I am careful to shut myself away from the telephone and other house noises. I create an atmosphere, to make space for God's voice, by lighting a candle. If it is morning, I set aside the day's agenda. If it is afternoon or evening, I try to let go of the day's activities.

I begin by asking the spirit of God to help me choose a scripture text or part of a psalm that I need to hear. I then read the words slowly as if for the first time. I pause occasionally to mull over words or phrases that strike me.

I read the text again and note those words and

phrases that have drawn my attention. I look at how they may be speaking directly to my present life.

The third time I read the text listening for the presence of God. As I stay with this holy listening, I become open to God's presence with me at this moment. I'm attentive to my feelings and emotions. What is the spirit of God nudging me towards? How am I being called to be aware of God's presence?

At the final reading, I stop thinking and begin feeling God's invitation to come to a place of resting with God, literally a place of contemplation.

Let me explain how this process works for me when I read Psalm 23, a Psalm that can quickly draw me into a comforting environment.

As I read the Psalm the first time, I get this far.

The Lord is my shepherd,
I need nothing more.
You give me rest in green meadows,
setting me near calm waters,
where you revive my spirit.

You guide me along sure paths,
you are true to your name.
Though I should walk in death's dark valley,
I fear no evil with you by my side,
Your shepherd's staff to comfort me.

As I read slowly, I can smell the grass and hear the sound of a refreshing stream. I find myself easily drawn away from my current activity. I can set aside my cares and concerns to experience God's peaceful presence.

continued on back



As I read the Psalm a second time, my soul responds to "I walk in death's dark valley". In the light of God's peaceful presence, I realize that I am tired. My soul is restless, and things in my life are unsettled.

As I read the Psalm yet again, I listen for the Spirit of God to meet my unsettled soul. I hear the words, "fear no evil with you by my side," and "comfort me".

Hearing these words, I begin to loosen my grip on fear. I choose to trust God's care for me. Slowly I begin to rest in the safety of my Shepherd. At this time I also lay before God my cares and concerns for all who have asked for our prayers.

After a time I come back to the present and thank God for these precious moments of refreshing prayer. I carry this prayer with me throughout the day. During the day, as I repeat the words, "though I should walk in death's dark valley, I fear no evil with you by my side", I experience this peace and trust again. This is the peace and trust I pray for all the people who have asked us to remember them in prayer.

I would be interested in hearing from you about your experience with Lectio Divina (sisters@srsclare.com). With your permission, I may share some of your responses in later newsletters.

Sr. Laura and the Sisters of St. Clare in Saginaw

20th Anniversary in Saginaw

Please mark your calendar now to celebrate this significant blessing with us. We are marking our 20th anniversary in the Diocese of Saginaw on the feast of St. Clare, August 11, 2011 at St. Mary Cathedral in Saginaw. We hope that you will join us for an evening prayer service of thanksgiving at 7 p.m. Bishop Cistone of the Diocese of Saginaw will give a reflection and Mary Sellors Malloy will lead us in song with refreshments following.

We began our contemplative community in Saginaw, in 1991 at the invitation of the late Bishop Ken Untener of the Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan. It has been our privilege to know the people here, to support them with our prayers and to receive their warmth and support. During our time here we have been changed deeply in our contemplative life especially by experiencing liturgy with the people in their parishes. We have visited 78 parishes out of the 105 in the diocese. When we could we introduced ourselves, explained our role as "Companions in Prayer" and invited people to share with us their needs and concerns through our website, for their trust we are deeply humbled.

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*If you would prefer to receive our Newsletter
by email please go to our web site:
<http://srsclare.com/about-us/companions-in-prayer-newsletter>
to give us your email address.*

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You are not alone
WE ARE PRAYING WITH AND FOR YOU.