

# Lenten Reflections

March 14, 2019



Several Lents ago I was given the book, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, by Fr. Thomas Keating, a Trappist Monk. The book was about the spiritual practice of centering prayer and Lectio Divina, and I was skeptical as to how much of the book would be practical or applicable to me. As a monk, Fr. Keating lived in a monastery, with significant swaths of time to devote to the spiritual life. In fact, living a spiritual life was his full-time job. How different from my world of juggling parenting, family obligations, and working fulltime.

Centering prayer and Lectio Divina have at their core meditation and contemplation. I am an extrovert by nature. I derive my energy from the external world of people, places, things and activity. I viewed meditation and contemplation as interchangeable practices but in fact they are very different. I found the book's clarification most helpful. Meditation is about thinking deeply while contemplation suspends deep thinking in favor of just being.

Centering prayer dates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, and Lectio Divina to the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE and the rule of St. Benedict. He outlined Lectio Divina's four steps, first read a passage from Scripture, second meditate on a word or words from that passage, third pray for wisdom, and fourth contemplate, just be.

Each Lent I commit to the practice of Lectio Divina though a bit modified to accommodate my less than contemplative nature and lifestyle. I set aside fifteen minutes to pause, be silent, read a passage

slowly, look for a word to ponder, stay with it but not overanalyze it, and then try to just be. The later definitely the most difficult part for me.

I have learned that Lectio Divina is not about accomplishing something but is about “holy leisure” a term coined by St. Benedict and one that helps me to ‘listen and attend with the ear of my heart”.

One of today’s readings is perfect for trying Lectio Divina, Mt. 7:7-8 Jesus said to his disciples: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” Pax et Bonum,

*Dr. Dolores Henchy, Professor & Dean, Center for Academic Success*

### **Thursday of the First Week in Lent Lectionary: 227**

#### **Reading 1**     [EST C:12, 14-16, 23-25](#)

Queen Esther, seized with mortal anguish,  
had recourse to the LORD.

She lay prostrate upon the ground, together with her handmaids,  
from morning until evening, and said:

"God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, blessed are you.  
Help me, who am alone and have no help but you,  
for I am taking my life in my hand.

As a child I used to hear from the books of my forefathers  
that you, O LORD, always free those who are pleasing to you.  
Now help me, who am alone and have no one but you,  
O LORD, my God.

"And now, come to help me, an orphan.

Put in my mouth persuasive words in the presence of the lion  
and turn his heart to hatred for our enemy,  
so that he and those who are in league with him may perish.  
Save us from the hand of our enemies;  
turn our mourning into gladness  
and our sorrows into wholeness."

#### **Responsorial Psalm**     [PS 138:1-2AB, 2CDE-3, 7C-8](#)

**R. (3a) Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.**

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,  
for you have heard the words of my mouth;  
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;

I will worship at your holy temple  
and give thanks to your name.

**R. Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.**

Because of your kindness and your truth;  
for you have made great above all things  
your name and your promise.

When I called, you answered me;  
you built up strength within me.

**R. Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.**

Your right hand saves me.

The LORD will complete what he has done for me;  
your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;  
forsake not the work of your hands.

**R. Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.**

**Verse Before The Gospel**      [PS 51:12A, 14A](#)

A clean heart create for me, O God;  
give me back the joy of your salvation.

**Gospel**      [MT 7:7-12](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Ask and it will be given to you;  
seek and you will find;

knock and the door will be opened to you.

For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds;  
and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

Which one of you would hand his son a stone  
when he asked for a loaf of bread,  
or a snake when he asked for a fish?

If you then, who are wicked,  
know how to give good gifts to your children,  
how much more will your heavenly Father give good things  
to those who ask him.

"Do to others whatever you would have them do to you.  
This is the law and the prophets."