



Faith Adoring the Mystery

Reading the Bible with
Saint Ephraim of Edessa
(the Harp of the Holy Spirit)

In regard to *lectio divina*
(the godly reading of Scripture)
St. Ephraim of Edessa writes:

In his book, Moses
described the creation of the natural world,
So that both Nature and Scripture
might bear witness to the Creator:
Nature, through man's use of it,
Scripture, through his reading of it.
These are witnesses,
which reach everywhere,
they are to be found at all times,
present at every hour,
confuting the unbeliever,
who defames the Creator.

I read the opening of this book
and was filled with joy,
for its verses and lines
spread out their arms to welcome me;
the first rushed out and kissed me,
and led me on to its companion;
and when I reached that verse
wherein is written
the story of Paradise,
it lifted me up and transported me
from the bosom of the book
to the very bosom of Paradise.

The eye and the mind
traveled over the lines
as over a bridge, and entered together
the story of Paradise.
The eye as it read
transported the mind;

in return the mind, too,
gave the eye rest
from its reading
for when the book had been read
The eye had rest
but the mind was engaged.

Both the bridge and the gate
of Paradise
did I find in this book.
I crossed over and entered;
my eye remained outside
but my mind entered within.
I began to wander
amid things not described.
This is a luminous height,
clear, lofty and fair:
Scripture named it Eden,
the summit of all blessings.

Hymns on Paradise, 5:2-5

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One form of *lectio* practice:

Listen to the Reading and note any word or phrase that strikes or resonates with your experience. Keep a bit of silence. Then share the word or phrase with the group. (This may be repeated a second time, leading into a “contemplative discussion” with those gathered.)

As this practice becomes more familiar, the balance could shift from short periods of silence and contemplative discussion to longer periods of quietude and meditation.

Another form of *lectio* practice:

Lectio:

First reading of the Scripture passage

Meditatio:

Sitting quietly and noting words,
phrases or images that strike you
or resonate with your experience

Second *lectio* of the Scripture passage

Ruminatio:

Sitting quietly and allowing the Holy Spirit
to assist in giving a new insight or
deeper understanding or
different connection
with the passage (i.e., rumination)

Third *lectio* of the Scripture passage

Oratio:

Prayer or repetition of the word or phrase

Contemplatio:

A simple, loving focus on God; a wordless,
imageless, silent contemplation on His presence

Operatio:

Sharing our experience with others
— which could further lead to action or works