

# VENI I DE E



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*The two disciples of John followed Jesus. Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" And they said to him, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." St. Jn. 1:37-39*

## A Spiritual Exercise

by Jason Brillhante

Spiritual reading is an effective tool to incorporate into our spiritual growth toward God. It can be an inspiring and profitable exercise of meditation and prayer. Saint Jerome says that when we pray we speak to God, but when we read, God speaks to us.

Spiritual reading is a prayerful method of reading. The objective is to read slowly and with full attention about how other men and women who came before us grew in holiness and cultivated their relationship with God. Spiritual reading can be done by anyone, and it can be done on a regular basis. Giving 15-20 minutes daily is an excellent way to carry out spiritual reading and to enhance one's prayer life.

The primary sources for spiritual reading include the autobiographies, biographies, and the writings of saints. For example, one can read the works of St. Augustine, who was once chained to his worldly passions and desires, but eventually converted to a faithful, committed love to Jesus Christ. He persevered through prayer, meditation, and pious acts. This is one example of how God works in the lives of his people by blessing them with graces to be converted to him. However, other sources make excellent material for spiritual reading such as the Scripture, a favorite Bible book, or the Pope's letters and writings, which are an excellent source of the Church's teachings.

Usually, one reads in order to learn. College students, for instance, spend many hours during their collegiate career doing just that. However, spiritual reading should not solely be an engagement of reading to learn but, according to St. Augustine, to read in order to nourish our souls. When you begin to read, say a prayer. Then set your mind on God and ask Him to enlighten your mind while you read. If you find something has made an impression, reread it as St. Ephrem would recommend. Also, do not be in a hurry to finish reading. This may make your efforts unprofitable. Remember to read slowly and give your full attention.

Exercising this spiritual tool, reading about the lives of men and women that are saints who once were flesh and blood, and allowing God and his Holy Spirit into this process, one can grow in holiness and in a renewed faith in God.

## Discerning the Call

*I think I may have a religious vocation- what do I do now?* Vocational discernment is an area with many questions for young people. A vocation is like a garden- it needs to be cultivated if it is to develop into all it is meant to be. Here are some things you can do to deepen your relationship with Christ and further discern whether or not you have a call to serve Christ in the Church.

- **Participate regularly in the sacraments.** Attend daily Mass when you are able, which will strengthen both your relationship with God, Whom you worship, and the community with which you worship. Receive the sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis.
- **Stay close to the Eucharist.** Have you ever been to Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament? Many parishes have this on First Fridays, and a few have perpetual adoration chapels. Rejoice in the gift of Himself that Christ has given us in this sacrament. While there you can pray silently, read scripture, or do another act of prayer and adoration.
- **Research!** There are many internet sites that have information on priestly and religious vocations. Do an internet search for "vocations to the Catholic priesthood" or something similar and browse through the returns.
- **Find a favorite devotion.** Attend daily There are many devotions that people have found to help them grow in the spiritual life, such as the Rosary, Divine Mercy, and Sacred Heart. Those discerning the priesthood may wish to pray to St. John Vianney, patron of parish priests.
- **Take the Next Step.** If you feel a continuing call to the priesthood or religious life, contact a vocation director. He or she can help you in your continuing discernment.

*A reflection on the priesthood  
from the writings of Bl. John XXIII:*

For, if you give careful consideration to all of the activity of a priest, what is the main point of his apostolate if not seeing to it that wherever the Church lives, a people who are joined by the bonds of faith, regenerated by holy Baptism and cleansed of their faults will be gathered together around the sacred altar? It is then that the priest, using the sacred power he has received, offers the divine Sacrifice in which Jesus Christ renews the unique immolation which He completed on Calvary for the redemption of mankind and for the glory of His heavenly Father. It is then that the Christians who have gathered together, acting through the ministry of the priest, present the divine Victim and offer themselves to the supreme and eternal God as a "sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God."

There it is that the people of God are taught the doctrines and precepts of faith and are nourished with the Body of Christ, and there it is that they find a means to gain supernatural life, to grow in it, and if need be to regain unity. And there besides, the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, grows with spiritual increase throughout the world down to the end of time.

- *Encyclical "Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia" §53, on St. John Vianney*

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**Prayer**

O Lord, Who did give Yourself in the Most Blessed Sacrament to feed and nourish us in our earthly journey, help me to truly appreciate this gift of Your body and blood.

*(For those discerning):* As I commune with You in this sacrament, so let me to open to your will in my life. Guide me by Your Spirit and lead me along the path to which You call me, strengthened by this holy food.

*(For those praying for vocations):* Please call more young people to Your service, so that all Your faithful may not be deprived of Your sacraments but rather receive Your graces through the guidance of those You send to shepherd them.

**CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:**

- Discernment Materials
- Learn about different types of vocations
- Notice of Upcoming Events

**WWW.FALLRIVERVOCATIONS.ORG**

**The "-eals" of Vocations**

by Riley Williams

What characteristics should one who is discerning a religious calling cultivate? While there are certainly many answers to this question, below are three things (which conveniently rhyme with each other) which I have found helpful in my own discernment; I hope they will be of some assistance to you as well.

**"Ideal"** Everyone in life should have ideals. The Christian is always called to greater holiness, which is an ideal. The supreme ideal is Christ, after Whom all are called to model themselves but particularly those who wish to give their lives to Him in service. To hold to an ideal is not easy; oftentimes in our striving we can stumble or be otherwise hindered in our attainment of it, but the important thing is to always, with the help of God, get up and start again.

**"Real"** Balancing the "ideal" is the "real." While these two words are often seen as opposites they can also complement each other. While striving for our ideals we must always keep in mind the situation in which we are, which will affect how we accomplish what we set out to do; this is called "prudence," which the Church sees as a virtue. In other words, let your reason guide you in the pursuit of your ideals. For example, while you may not be able to attend Mass everyday (an ideal), there's usually nothing standing in the way of daily scripture reading and personal prayer.

**"Zeal"** Driving the above two attitudes should be a healthy zeal. We should enter into our life with Christ not with a spirit of resignation but rather one of excitement. For example, don't see celibacy in the terms of what you lose, but rather what you gain- the ability to give your entire self to Christ and His people for the greater glory of God. Whenever we see an opportunity to spread the Gospel we should take it. Just as man in the parable sells all he has to buy a field with a great treasure in it (Mt. 13:44), so we should be ready to give up our all for God.