



Home / Daily Meditations / [Visio Divina: A Practice of Sacred Seeing](#)



CONTEMPLATIVE READING

Visio Divina: A Practice of Sacred Seeing

Friday, June 13, 2025

In the way that lectio divina invites us to “chew” on a sacred text, allowing us to receive its flavor and wisdom, visio divina is a contemplative practice of receiving God’s presence through what we see. Spiritual teacher Christine Valters Painter writes:

In visio divina, we move our awareness into our hearts and let our vision arise from this place of integration rather than analysis, and receptivity rather than grasping after the things we desire. Our intention is to see things from a new perspective, but the paradox is that this longing requires us to relinquish our usual ways of relating to the world. [1]

Painter suggests taking a few moments of silence to center in our bodies, becoming present to the Spirit.

Visio divina means sacred seeing and is essentially an application of the rhythms of lectio to a prayer of “gazing.” Gazing is looking upon something with the eyes of the heart. It is not a hard or penetrating stare but a soft receptive way of being with an image....

From this heart-centered place, slowly open your eyes and cast a gentle gaze upon your photo [or image] with the eyes of your heart. Take a few moments to allow your eyes to wander over the whole landscape of the image, exploring all of its shapes, colors, contours, details, and symbols. Allow yourself to simply be present to the details of this image.

 Center for Action *and* Contemplation

Slowly begin to notice if an invitation begins to emerge from these memories, feelings, and images moving in you. In the concrete circumstances of your life right now, what awareness or action is God calling you to? What is my invitation in this moment of my life? How am I being called to respond?...

As you become more comfortable with praying in this way and allowing visual elements to be a “text” for prayer, you can begin to bring this spirit of visio divina with you even as you are out walking.... As you receive your images, pay attention to moments that seem to shimmer and make space within your heart to be with whatever feelings or memories these stir, trusting that God is at work in the process. Over time, you might discover that there is an invitation being offered to you in this time of slowing down and deepening your way of seeing in the world....

Our commitment to visio divina and seeing the world as a sacred text, and everything as worthy of our attention and presence, rather than divided between what is “ugly” and “beautiful,” or as a mere imitation of our own expectations, means that we might begin to see this as true within our own hearts as well. [2]

References:

[1] Christine Valters Paintner, *Eyes of the Heart: Photography as a Christian Contemplative Practice* (Sorin Books, 2013), 30.

[2] Paintner, *Eyes*, 36–38, 48.

Image credit and inspiration: Annie Spratt, *untitled* (detail), 2018, photo, [Unsplash](#). [Click here to enlarge image](#). *Through the stillness of our witnessing, word and image become thresholds—stirring the unseen and inviting Spirit to speak through the quiet bloom of our attention.*

EXPLORE FURTHER