

Visio Divina

The Sacred Art of Gazing at a Picture

Visio Divina is much like the process of *Lectio Divina*, except we are gazing at a picture rather than listening to the Word of God.

Begin prayerfully. Gaze at the piece of art you've chosen. Imagine you are watching the scene unfold as you gaze at the picture. Experience the details. Become aware of your feelings as you look at the picture. Let the picture become a window into your soul.

You want to try to move beyond typical evaluation questions ("Do I like this painting?" "Is it good?"). You are not admiring the artist's technique or analyzing how it is framed. *Visio Divina* is a process of gazing at a picture, noticing how you are responding (or not responding) to it, and then opening yourself to the Holy Spirit as you seek to understand why you respond as you do. You could use these questions:

"What catches my attention?"

What attracts me?

What repels me?

Or you might notice/ask yourself: *Where am I in this picture?* And then reflect on why you are in that particular place. What does that say about you?

Or, you might ask: *Who am I in this picture?* Are you drawn to one particular person in the picture? Reflect on why you think you are drawn to that person at this particular point in your life. What does this attraction reveal to you?

Where am I?

Who am I?

Visio Divina in Four Movements

First, **NOTICE** what you are drawn to

Second, **PONDER** this. Seek to discern the truth that it reveals.

Third, notice your **EMOTIONS**. What is stirred within? Do you have an emotional response to some aspect of the picture? What thoughts, emotions, or memories are stirred? Hold that response for a while. Treasure it. Honor it.

Finally, let this process of gazing draw you into **INTIMATE PRAYER**. Commune with Jesus. Recognizing you are in his presence, united in his love, **LISTEN**: What invitation do you discern?

It's lovely to conclude your sacred time by responding with heartfelt singing, or journaling, or creating your own piece of art in response to the Lord's invitation. In whatever way feels most inviting to you, capture the significance of the experience of sacred gazing at art through an action.

