

Reading for an Evolutionary Age: OMEGA LECTIO DIVINA

by ILIA DELIO

The Omega Center engages new ideas on bridging science and religion primarily through the lens of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin but through other thinkers as well. Teilhard spent years in the deserts of China where there were few distractions keeping him from pondering the deep questions of faith and life. I imagine Teilhard spending long hours by the campfire contemplating the questions of human life, evolution, and the profound mystery of God. He worked through his ideas carefully by pondering them over and over again. One can see traces of this in his writings where themes are repeated in different texts but never in the same way. As Teilhard thought deeply about a question, he wrote down his insights and in this way began to build a new system of thought.



How do we come to new insights in our own age? We have become “speed readers” and efficient organizers. But the type of thinking that leads to new insights requires slowed time, silence, and ponderous brooding over new ideas. How do we read Teilhard and creative thinkers in a meaningful way? Many of the ideas in the Omega blogs stem from long periods of deep theological and philosophical reflection; hence they cannot be skimmed over lightly. So, how best to engage this material?

One way is to practice a type of *lectio divina* when reading this material. Literally translated from Latin as “divine reading,” *lectio divina* is the ancient monastic method of prayerfully reading the Scriptures. The process begins with a slow, careful reading of the text [*lectio*], followed by meditation or pondering the specific words or phrases which speak directly to the heart [*meditatio*] which in turn leads the heart to prayer [*oratio*] and the deepening of prayer which is contemplation [*contemplatio*].

In a similar way we can approach the Omega texts in a slow, prayerful manner. I would suggest the following approach:

- Read the blog several lines at a time. Pause in between the sentences. What did you read? What did you understand? What did you not understand and why?
- Reflect on the words or phrases that were meaningful for you. Keep these thoughts in mind throughout the day. Ponder them or, as the ancients taught, ruminate on them. What is it about these ideas that continue to speak to you? Write down your thoughts.
- Bring the ideas that speak to you into prayer. Do these insights expand your understanding of God? Do they provide a new horizon of religious meaning? Do you find yourself lifted up by these ideas into a wider expanse of life?
- Stay with your insights in silent prayer. Sit quietly with them and allow these ideas to circulate through you. Let your mind stand in your heart and your heart center in God.
- Return to the blog and the sections you either did not agree with or had a difficult time understanding. Do you see these ideas in a different light? If not, either let them go or try to understand why you do not agree – and then let them go.
- If you are at peace with your new insights, then open your eyes, unlock your ears and apply your heart: What are you conscious of? What are you aware of within yourself? How does your new awareness change the way you understand God and see the world? What is kindled within you?

Conclusion

At the end of the day, review the new thoughts or ideas that you gained from reading the blog material. Give thanks to God for these insights. Realize that it is the Spirit of God within you who is struggling for new birth (Rom 8:22). Realize that insight is the midwife of new life. Know yourself to be a thinker and thus a participant in the motherhood of God.