

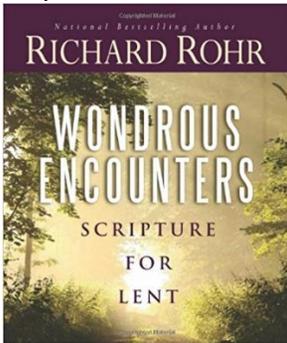
## LENTEN LCG READING PROGRAM

Dear LCG members and friends,

You are gently/lovingly invited again to share Lent with our LCG sisters and brothers. Join our Gethsemani monks to daily read and pray on a selected book. The discipline of daily reading and prayer coupled with the support of our LCG comrades encourages a rich, Lenten spiritual encounter.

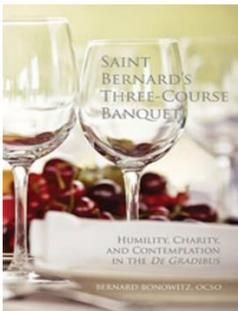
Recommended by our colleagues:

- ***Wondrous Encounters, Scripture for Lent*** by Richard Rohr. "Rohr has transformed the way I look at Advent and Lent with his writings":



<https://www.amazon.com/Wondrous-Encounters-Richard-Rohr-F-M/dp/0867169877>

- ***Saint Bernard's Three-Course Banquet: Humility, Charity, and Contemplation in the De Gradibus***, By: [Bernard Bonowitz OCSO](#)



- ***Meditations for Lent***, by Jacques-Benigne Bossuet. Translator Christopher Blum has selected from Bishop Bossuet's voluminous works forty brief but remarkably powerful meditations, arranged them according to the events reported in the Gospels, and lovingly translated each one for us.

- ***Sacred Fire: A Vision for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity*** by Ron Rolheiser.
- ***Lenten Reflections With Bishop Robert Barron***. The free e-mail sign up for daily reading/meditation by Fr. Barron: <http://www.lentreflections.com/>
- ***Little Black Book*** by the Saginaw Diocese. Many find a rich source of Lenten material often available through our local parish.

Below are Fr. Michael's reflections on this practice and how it plays out at Gethsemani.

### **+LENTEN READING, the Practice and Gethsemani**

Every year on the first Sunday of Lent, each member of the Gethsemani community receives a book at the end of the morning Chapter, that he is to use as his Lenten reading. A couple weeks before this day the Abbot will announce that each of us should select a book for Lenten reading and put it at his office door. This gives him a chance to be sure it is appropriate and if nothing has been given him, he himself will pick a book for the brother as Lenten reading. A few prefer the abbot to pick something for them. These are placed in various piles around the Chapter room and a few designated brothers distribute them when asked to do so. There is the old custom of bowing to the person who gives you your Lenten book as a sacred gift.

Regarding the practice, it is brought up in the Rule where Benedict gives a chapter on the Daily Manual Labor. St Benedict is obviously putting it into this context to remind the monk that it is important for him to maintain a balance between prayer (public and private) manual labor and *lectio divina*. In Lent Benedict allows extra time in the morning for the monks to read. He knows well the power of the Word to change our lives, to aid the ongoing conversion that is given extra emphasis during this season. To designate a book as "to be read the whole of it straight through" is saying more than we may first realize. It is to move us into a sense of the sacredness of the reading that will expose us to the Word of God whom we will meet in the reading. We are not to jump around at whim but read it straight through so that we are being the ones who are being read as much as doing the reading. Effective *lectio divina* is where the word comes off the page and reveals us in the eyes of God, enabling us to take a close look at the values we hold or aspire to and how we are living them. Before beginning to read there is the custom of saying a prayer so as to be disposed to this presence of God's Word.

Designating a time for this each day gets us to stop our normal routines and being in control of our lives. It gives us the time to sit and reflect, to let a sacred book inspire us in such a way that we personally taste more of Christ the living Word of God. Lectio early on was done mostly with the Scriptures as texts. In fact, Benedict's community had few books to start with, mostly being various books of the Scriptures or commentaries on them. So any book we chose today should have content that comes out of an in depth experience of the Scriptures, something that will challenge us like the Scriptures themselves will do. A favorite Lenten book early on around Gethsemani was

the Life of Christ by Romano Guardini, the ideal was to give us a fresh look at the living Word of God.

Much more could be said but this gives something of how we experience Lenten reading at Gethsemani. A couple other recommendations I have would be The Art of Prayer, an Orthodox Anthology, edited by Timothy Ware and Praying the Psalms in Christ, by Laurence Kriegshauser, OSB. I personally like the idea of each person selecting what she or he is going to read and run it by your group leader as kind of a check on it being a true vehicle of God's own living Word.

Let me add one further thought about Lenten reading in regards to our practice at Gethsemani. As a community we do this of an evening, every evening except on Sunday when one is free to do as one likes. The other days, the Lenten reading begins at 6:45 of an evening and lasts until 7:25 when we head off for Compline. If one likes, he may stop the reading at 7:15 and go pray with it until Compline time. Most stay with the reading until Compline. How one does the reading is again up to the individual, we are free to stop and reflect anywhere along the line or just pray where one is seated as the Spirit moves. The time honored "technique" of Lectio is the reading, meditating, prayer and contemplation. The most valuable way of doing it is to allow any combination of the four aspects as the Spirit leads one.

Peace to one and all, Michael