

## ***Lectio divina* as a method of Christian initiation on the example of selected pastoral works of Cardinal Carlo M. Martini and Father Matta al-Miskin**

### Summary

The practice of *lectio divina* has its roots in biblical and rabbinic Judaism, and was practiced in Christianity from its very beginnings. At its center is the prayerful reading of the Holy Bible and contemplation of its contents as Word of God, leading to prayer and action in accordance with God's will. Specifically, Christian *lectio divina* was born in the patristic era, and for centuries was vividly implemented in the Church in the East and in the West. However, from the thirteenth, and especially in the sixteenth century, it began to decline and was forgotten. Its revival in the Catholic Church took place mainly after the Second Vatican Council. Currently, it is promoted and practiced more widely in the Catholic Church. In the Church of the East, it survived primarily in monastic life. It is practiced, for example, by Coptic monks. And although similar in its essence, in external expression both traditions of practicing *lectio divina* differ from each other. This diversity of approach, which we perceive as complementary today, is also seen in contemporary propagators of *lectio divina* in the East and the West.

As indicated in the dissertation title, *lectio divina* is a method of Christian initiation. This means that the practice of *lectio divina* as a form of prayer is not an end in itself, but a method. It is a specific set of activities and measures of a religious (spiritual) nature to achieve a specific religious goal. This goal is to lead the believer on the path of prayerful reading (*lectio*) and consideration of the texts of the Holy Scriptures as Word of God (*meditatio*), to contemplative union with God (*contemplatio*), resulting in acting in accordance with God's will (*actio*). In the dissertation, it is shown above all in the example of pastoral activity of the Catholic Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini and the Orthodox Copt, Abbott Father Matta al-Miskin.

The first chapter of the dissertation is devoted to the history of the birth, development, fall, and revival of the practice of *lectio divina* over the centuries. The second chapter presents the understanding of *lectio divina* as a method of Christian initiation used in the pastoral activity of Carlo Maria Martini. Cardinal Martini was a Jesuit, and his understanding of *lectio divina* has strong roots in the Bible, the teaching of the Church Fathers, as well as in the spirituality developed in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Retreats by the *lectio divina* method, proposed by the Cardinal are addressed mainly to Western Christians living in the 20th

and 21st centuries, and not only to consecrated, but also to lay people. In the case of Father Matta, his understanding of *lectio divina* as a method of initiating Christian life is also rooted in the Bible and teaching of the Church Fathers, especially the Desert Fathers. This is shown in chapter three of the dissertation.

The dissertation shows that, in the understanding of the *lectio divina* practice, there are several fundamental differences between the authors discussed. First, it is the context: Matta al-Miskin is a Copt — an Egyptian Christian who experiences his Christianity in the Islamic world. Secondly, his *lectio divina* draws primarily from the hermitic practice of the Desert Fathers, for whom, as for every Coptic monk, St. Anthony the Hermit is an unsurpassed pattern. It can be argued that, just as the spiritual exercises (retreats) proposed by Cardinal Martini following the method of *lectio divina* are marked by St. Ignatius of Loyola, spiritual exercises (retreats) following the *lectio divina* method proposed to Coptic monks by Matta al-Miskin are marked by the life of St. Anthony and his apothegms. Third, Cardinal Martini is a well-educated theologian and exegete, expert on biblical languages, exegetical methods of interpretation of the Holy Bible, recognized erudite. In contrast to him, Father Matta al-Miskin is an ordinary monk, although educated (he was a pharmacist), but he had no specialized theological and exegetical education apart from the monastery's spiritual formation. However, in spiritual terms, both have a lot in common: they were spiritual guides for many Christ's followers; they both thought that *lectio divina* was the best form of prayer leading to a living experience of God. The rich diversity of their pastoral activities is proof of the thesis of this dissertation that the practice of *lectio divina* is the best way of Christian initiation by meeting the living Christ, making himself present in prayer with the Holy Scriptures containing the living God's Word.

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