

Contemplative Photography and *Visio Divina*: Seeing with Eyes of the Heart

Visio divina (sacred seeing) is a way of seeing the world with the eyes of the heart, which is the place of receptivity and openness, rather than with the mind, which is often the place of grasping and planning. It is an adaptation of the ancient practice of *lectio divina*.

One of the best ways to practice is to go on a contemplative walk, which is a walk where your sole focus is on being present to each moment's invitation as it unfolds, rather than setting out with a particular goal. There is nowhere to "get to." You begin by breathing deeply and centering yourself, bringing your awareness down to your heart center.

Go out in the world for a walk, it could be just down your block or in a nearby park. Bring a camera - a simple camera on your phone is fine. As you walk stay present to the world as a sacred text, much like you would in *lectio divina* with the scriptures. Below is a suggested process to move through.

Settling and Shimmering

Breathe deeply. Move your awareness down to your heart center. Settle into this moment. Release any thoughts or expectations. See if you can keep a soft gaze which is diffuse and open, as opposed to a hard stare when you are looking for something. Gently hold the word for the day in your awareness with a sense of spaciousness.

As you begin walking, pay attention to things around you that shimmer, which means something that calls for your attention, invites you to spend some time with it. It might be a natural object like a tree or branch, it might be a sign in a shop window that catches your attention, or the way light is flooding the street. Stay open to all possibilities for how the world might speak to your heart.

Savoring and Stirring

Stay with what shimmers and allow it to unfold in your heart, savoring your experience.

Make space within for images, feelings, and memories to stir. How does your body respond? What are you noticing happening inside in response to this experience?

Summoning and Serving

Slowly shift your awareness to a sense of invitation or summoning which rises up from your prayer. How does the prayer stirring in you meet you in this particular moment of your life? How might you be called into a new awareness or kind of service through this experience?

You might explore with your camera how gazing at this shimmering moment through the lens supports you in seeing it more deeply. The practice of contemplative photography is to “receive images as gifts” rather than to “take photos”. If you notice yourself grasping, put the camera down. But if the lens is helping you to see this moment from different perspectives and deepening into it, the camera can be a great gift.

Slowing and Stilling

Once your walk feels complete, return home and release all of the words and images and slow down even more deeply. Allow yourself some time for silence and stillness. Breathe gratitude in and out. Simply notice your experience. Feel free to share your photos with the community on our [Holy Disorder of Dancing Monks Facebook group](#).

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