Praying with John Baptist de La Salle
Carl Koch

In reaction to Martin Luther's emphasis on personal reading of the Bible, the Council of Trent discouraged laypeople from meditating on the word of God. Catholics were told to listen to the preaching of their priests, who would explain the Bible to them. The Catholic Church placed stress on the role of tradition in informing the faithful as to the meaning of the sacred texts. Thus, John Baptist De La Salle's exhortation to his Brothers to study the Gospels daily and to carry a copy with them at all times stood out as unusual in his era.

De La Salle's knowledge of Scripture was profound. Passages from the Bible filled all of his meditations and other writings. He knew that by meditating on the word of God, people encounter Jesus Christ. Upon encountering Jesus, they will believe. In believing and in deepening this belief, they will be so filled with faith that they will spread the Good News effectively and live full lives.

A meditative studying of the Bible--*lectio divina*--is an ancient form of prayer for Christians.

* Pick a short passage from a story or chapter in the Bible that strikes a chord with you.
* Read the passage slowly, relishing each word. Let God's Spirit speak to you through the words of the Scriptures you are reading.
* Ponder the passage, letting your mind wander over what you have read. A main idea will probably emerge, some notion that stands out because it relates to your life experience. Spend time thinking about these words; sometimes just repeating them over and over helps.
* Respond to the passage by talking to Jesus. Let the Spirit lead you. Express all your feelings and thoughts. (Many people like to write their responses or dialogues with Jesus in their journals.)
* End the meditation with a concluding prayer.

Today's reading: Acts of the Apostles 2

On the day of Pentecost, Peter said to the Jewish people,
"Let the whole house of Israel know for certain
that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart,
and they asked Peter and the other Apostles,
"What are we to do, my brothers?"
Peter said to them,
"Repent and be baptized, every one of you,
in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins;
and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off,
whomever the Lord our God will call."
He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them,
"Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."
Those who accepted his message were baptized,
and about three thousand persons were added that day.

Submitted by Brother Tim Coldwell