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Introduction of the Lectio Divina at Genk

BELGIUM - The current state of the Church in the West is marked by a deep concern for those believers who have left the church or no longer attend services. Unfortunately, in the process, our Church seems to be neglecting the pastoral and spiritual needs of those who remain faithful and continue to actively participate in our faith-community. While these steadfast believers are in need of pastoral support and guidance, the Church's preoccupation with those who have left has led to a lack of attention to the ongoing spiritual needs of its members. This particular mindset within the present Church was brought to my attention by a dedicated believer who is greatly troubled by the lack of care and attention shown by the Church towards those who still consider themselves part of our faith-community.

Our Mother Church in the West is actively focused on modernizing and adapting to the changing times, a necessary endeavor. However, it is equally important for the Church not to forget its devoted children who draw solace and meaning from the timeless traditions that define Catholicism. Many Western churches are struggling with dwindling attendance, as few parishioners are drawn to the unfamiliar and sometimes peculiar modernized liturgical and sacramental services. People have conveyed their sense of detachment, explaining that they no longer feel the desire to attend their church due to the way the Holy Eucharist is celebrated, which, in their view, often falls short of the reverence and sanctity they associate with the divine liturgy. This has left them feeling disheartened and disconnected.

Having heard these stories, I have made a decision to rekindle some of the traditional spiritual practices that foster deep Catholic faith and strengthen Christian fellowship. Upon my arrival in the Genk community, people began asking me about my intentions and plans here. One individual inquired, *“Will you be following the path of your elderly confreres by remaining within the community, or will you take action to address the pastoral needs of those in search*

of spiritual and liturgical services that truly glorify God rather than emphasize human accomplishments?” In response, I explained, “I’m uncertain, but I will make an effort to reintroduce certain traditional liturgical practices that redirect our focus towards God rather than ourselves.”

Therefore, I initiated Lectio Divina in the community. I inquired with the people if they were interested in joining this meditative practice centered around the word of God. Some expressed curiosity and a willingness to give it a try. A month has passed since I introduced this practice, and now we have a dedicated group of six individuals who regularly attend this communal gathering to delve into and share their thoughts on the word of God. Every Thursday at 3:00 PM, we convene in our chapel to engage in a deliberate and meditative reading of the upcoming Sunday's scripture passages. Following a moment of contemplative silence, we openly share our personal insights and reflections on these sacred texts. This practice has become a meaningful and enriching part of our spiritual journey together.

They have conveyed their enthusiasm for this spiritual exercise, expressing their delight at the opportunity to share their own reflections on the word of God. One individual shared their thoughts, saying, *“We had become accustomed to merely listening to sermons, but now we can actively engage in sharing our reflections on God's Word. This is truly captivating, and I'm overjoyed.”* Another person, demonstrating their support, brought a plant as a symbolic gesture and expressed, *“Our Church will not wither away here. It's clear that God sends His messengers and servants at precisely the right moments. I'm grateful that you are striving to infuse new vitality and purpose into our community. I want to express my gratitude for your efforts. Keep it up. You have my prayers, and may God bless you.”*

Amid our concerns about those who have distanced themselves from the Church, let us never lose sight of those who hold a deep affection for the Church and remain actively engaged within its community. It is equally vital to extend our care and attention to their pastoral needs, regardless of whether we are diocesan or religious priests. The faithful are earnestly praying for priests who wholeheartedly devote themselves to carrying out God's will with unwavering commitment in every aspect of their lives – heart, mind, body, and strength.

Fr. Nepo, SMM