

SONJA CORBITT

— HOW TO —

PRAY
LIKE
MARY



ASCENSION

West Chester, Pennsylvania

Nihil obstat: Rev. Andrew J. Bulso, S.T.L.
Censor Librorum
May 10, 2019

Imprimatur: Very Rev. John J. H. Hammond, J.C.L.
Vicar General, Diocese of Nashville
May 10, 2019

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Ascension
Post Office Box 1990
West Chester, PA 19380
1-800-376-0520
ascensionpress.com

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-945179-49-5

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Dear Reader,

Perhaps you love Scripture but would like to get more from what you're reading. Maybe you have felt wary of applying Scripture to your personal life or would like guidance on how to go about it. Possibly you feel Scripture lacks any meaning for you personally; it's all old history that has nothing to do with you or your life. You might have wounds that need attention from God but you do not know how to reach him—how to “hear” God or know if he is hearing your prayers.

You are invited “to an encounter with Jesus, Word of God made flesh, as an event of grace that runs through the reading and the hearing of the Sacred Scriptures.”¹ God's Word is there in the Scriptures for us. He wants us to understand his message and his promises. He wants to enter our lives and hearts through his Word. LOVE the Word®, a unique approach to praying with Scripture, will help you achieve that relationship with God through his Word that is shown to us by the Blessed Virgin Mary. Whether your search is for connection, answers, or understanding, LOVE the Word will help Scripture come to life for you on a daily basis.

Through the course of this book, we will explore Mary as the principle model of prayer, probe each of the four steps of LOVE the Word in depth, and then practice each step under Mary's guidance. My prayer is that you will learn how to love the Word like Mary, from Mary, as she teaches us to ponder the Word we hear and read through the landscape of our lives. Let's begin.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sonja". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop at the end of the word.

¹ John L. Allen Jr., “Synod: Final Propositions of the Synod of Bishops,” *National Catholic Reporter*, October 27, 2008, prop. 9, nronline.org/.

Chapter One

LOVE the Word[®]: *Lectio Without the Latin*

My Relationship with Mary

As a convert to the Catholic Church from a Baptist denomination more than a decade ago, I came to most things “Catholic” the backward way. Mary, for instance. For most Catholics, Mary is a tender mother, but I had an ambivalent attitude toward her at first. My bishop once counseled me during confession that the measure of my Catholic faith is my relationship to Mary. Honestly, I left the confessional offended, because like many current and former non-Catholics, I found honoring her to be the most bewildering notion of Catholic doctrine and therefore preferred to ignore her entirely.

My bishop’s statement bothered me for years until I finally went to Mary directly. My first communication to her was, *I don’t get this at all. I don’t get you at all. I think all the attention you get is weird. But I am willing to understand if you are willing to teach me.* I think she must have felt sorry for me, because after I placed my hand in hers, I made a

breathhtaking discovery that has deepened my faith in the gentlest, most motherly way. I am thrilled to share it with you in this book.

My Relationship with Scripture

In contrast to my relationship with Mary, my relationship with the Bible began long before I became Catholic. As a Baptist, I did not have sacraments or priesthood, so the only dependable way I knew to connect with God personally was through his Word, the Bible. So I embarked on a fitful attempt to establish a daily quiet time in the Scriptures.

Although it would be an understatement to say I am not a morning person, Scripture is full of exhortations to connect with God first thing:

“O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you, and watch” (Psalm 5:3).

“Satisfy us in the morning with your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days” (Psalm 90:14).

“His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning” (Lamentations 3:22-23).

I decided to begin with the book of Proverbs, because it has thirty-one chapters, one for every day of the month. I got up before sunrise to allow thirty minutes of reading and prayer with the Lord before driving to work. Because it was predawn, those initial attempts consisted primarily of my sleeping through most of my thirty-minute allotment. *Perhaps that’s why nothing is happening*, I thought, and complained to a mentor. After all, I had tried it for five whole days!

My mentor assured me that God would “show up” to meet me if I remained disciplined in prayer. I returned to the arduous, seemingly useless effort. On day twenty-six, God showed up. The Creator of the universe and lover of my soul spoke his silent Word directly into my heart through Proverbs 26:11. With a terrified thrill, I read it as spoken directly to me: “*Like a dog that returns to his vomit [Sonja] is a fool who repeats her folly.*”

The shock of such a raw, almost coarse sentence appearing in God’s holy Word, along with how clearly the Holy Spirit made me know he was speaking to me about myself through its earthiness, was an irresistible combination. That God says such things communicated his desire to receive me in all my own indelicate, earthy messiness, and showed me that I could *experience* his welcome as real and intimately present to me. For the first time, I felt his longing to show us through his Word how he knows and loves us more deeply than we can know and love ourselves, and he speaks to and embraces our deepest being with an omniscient, omnipresent finger of pure, gentle love. Experiencing God in the Scriptures that first day made me hungry for more, and I was amazed that he continued to meet me there. He became *personal* to me. I wanted to *know* him more. I wanted to *hear* him more. I wanted to *obey* him more. I wanted him to be proud of me.

So I sat at his feet in the Word every day, pouring out my heart, confessing my sin, laying out my problems and worries. I read through book after book and found insight after insight. “For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little” (Isaiah 28:10).

My faithful, daily prayer time with the Scriptures went from thirty minutes to forty-five minutes, and then to an hour. I no longer read because I was supposed to do it, but because I wanted to discover more of the treasure God was revealing to me. When I came to passages that spoke to me, offering me hope or wisdom or insight, I savored them. I prayed over the passages and recorded them in my prayer journal. I asked God to confirm what I thought he was saying to me, and I anticipated his answers by watching the days' events.

As I grew in my understanding of Scripture and read more attentively, I realized that my faith had previously been pitifully lacking, and more intellectual than personal. I settled into a regular routine of prayer with Scripture that began to bring order to my disordered, painful life. I began to relate to him without fear as Heavenly Father. My relationship with Jesus and other people became fresh and fertile. The Holy Spirit seemed to be speaking at every turn as I discovered more about what God was like, his purposes and his ways.

As a new Catholic, I was surprised to learn that my daily quiet time was, in fact, an ancient Catholic practice, and not one my previous denomination had invented at all. My daily time with Scripture grew even more rich when I realized—to my delighted surprise—that pondering the Word of God in silence and solitude on a regular basis was also Mary's secret to deep, fruitful, powerful prayer.

MARY, MODEL OF PRAYER

In a 2012 general audience, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI called Mary our “model for prayer,” saying that her

extraordinary holiness is “the result of a deep relationship with God developed in assiduous and intense prayer.”²

This deep relationship with God, he said, is characterized by her capacity to maintain an uninterrupted state of contemplation by meditating on events before God in the silence of her heart. He pointed out how God particularly placed Mary at the decisive moment of salvation history, and how she was able to respond with full availability precisely *because* she pondered events and circumstances in her heart with him. Her full availability incarnated the Word and shared him with the world.

After the Ascension, Mary continued to share Jesus with the disciples through the most precious of her possessions: her living memory of him. The apostles’ poignant sharing and waiting in expectant prayer *with Mary* brought forth the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, tongues of fire that set the world aflame. If it was true then, how much truer is it for us?

Mary connects us deeply to the Holy Spirit, just as she did the apostles, through her process of listening and pondering. She teaches us the *one thing necessary* (see Luke 10:38-42) through her unique way of prayer; she models for us how to *love* the Word. She shows us that it is only through “a constant, intimate, wholly loving bond with her Son that we can leave ‘our house’ ... and proclaim everywhere the Lord Jesus, Savior of the world.”³

² National Catholic Register, *Pope Benedict: Mary Is Our Model for Prayer*, March 14, 2012, ncregister.com/.

³ Benedict XVI, “Mary and Prayer,” in *A School of Prayer: The Saints Show Us How to Pray* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2013), n. 29.

MARY PRAYS SCRIPTURE

When Mary prayed, she expressed herself, in part, with Scripture! She showed us this in offering the Magnificat as a song of thanksgiving verbalized to God in Elizabeth's presence. As a devout Jewish woman, Mary would have prayed all her life for the coming of the Jewish Messiah. Now God had answered her prayer—shockingly—through Mary herself (see Luke 1:46–55). Based on the earlier Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1–10), Mary's song shows her intimacy with and love of Scripture. Both songs demonstrate the parallelism of Hebrew poetry and psalmody. Mary was so familiar with Scripture that her Magnificat echoes both Hannah's song and the psalms of the Old Testament.

Hannah's song was also a song of joy and praise. Hannah—like Abraham's wife Sarah—had been barren, but in old age both women conceived by God's promise. Sarah became the mother of Isaac and all those with faith (see Genesis 17, 18, and 22), and Hannah became the mother of the prophet Samuel.

Both Sarah and Hannah—barren women who became unlikely mothers—can be seen as types, or foreshadowings, of Mary, although the miracle of Mary's motherhood was due to her virginity, not barrenness. Mary is the culmination of God's work through all the women who fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, “Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not had labor pains! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her that is married,’ says the LORD” (Isaiah 54:1).

In his letter to the Galatians, St. Paul uses this passage from Isaiah to liken the Church to Sarah's children—children of the promise (see Galatians 4:26-27). As the fulfillment of Sarah, Mary freely embraced Jesus and became mother and symbol of the Church through him (see Revelation 12). The Church, as mother, embraces all who embrace Christ.

For these reasons the Church has used these passages in worship liturgy to speak of Mary since the very beginning. Each of these passages—Sarah's story, Hannah's song, Isaiah's prophecy, the Magnificat, and Paul's letter to the Galatians—all “rejoice” in a “barren” woman who gives birth to a promise of God. Mary is the New Sarah, the New Hannah, the New Jerusalem personified. Mary is the Mother of the Church (see Revelation 12:13-17) through the Word of God.

We too can pray the Scriptures and acclimate ourselves to them until they become what prophetically erupts from our hearts and lips at any given moment. We can adjust our practice and spirit to God's Word so that it gets us outside of ourselves and into the flow of what the Holy Spirit is already achieving in the Church, which he has been building and nurturing for millennia.

Mary's practice of *being with* the Word, where one lets go of one's own agenda in reading and opens oneself to what God wants to say, is at the heart of a method of praying that the Church has known and taught for centuries under the name *lectio divina*, which is Latin for “divine reading.” Scripture will come alive for us and make us bearers of Christ into the world when we begin approaching it as God's direct Word to us about our individual lives, circumstances, and problems.

The saints have always said the best place to begin in the Scriptures is to pray with them.

THE HISTORY OF PRAYER WITH THE SCRIPTURES

Early Prayer with Scripture

At the Creation of the cosmos, God's Word brought forth life. Later, "in many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1). When spiritual re-creation was on the horizon, God again sent forth his Word to a single person who already had a habit of connecting to it.

I like to picture Mary praying as described by Anne Catherine Emmerich, an eighteenth-century German stigmatic whose visions inspired parts of the 2004 movie *The Passion of the Christ*. Emmerich envisioned Mary in her private chamber, praying specifically for the Messiah promised to her people when the announcement that *she* would be the mother of the Messiah came to her through the angel.⁴ It's just as likely that Mary received God's Word from the angel amid the pots and pans of her duties and station in life. But Emmerich's private revelation of Mary praying in her chamber makes sense to me, in part because for Jews of Mary's time, every day belonged to God and many hours were devoted to prayer. As a faithful Jewish girl, Mary would have prayed daily on her own and with her family.

Mary's practice of daily prayer would have begun before Christ was born. But long before Mary, the Israelites did the same. In the earliest years of Jewish history, no set prayer order or prayer form existed. Individuals prayed as often as and in whatever words and posture they chose. However,

⁴ Anne Catherine Emmerich, *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, trans. Michael Palairot (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2011), 141–147.

after Moses' lifetime, a set order of service developed as part of morning and evening sacrifices in the tabernacle. Later, at the Temple in Jerusalem, the prayers extended even after the evening sacrifice, later into the night.

After the exile, when the Jews returned to their homeland, the prophets and priests standardized Scripture passages and established three daily readings as a requirement for daily Jewish prayers. Daily, fixed-hour prayer was born and flourished, and special prayers for the Sabbath and other feasts and festivals were added.

This pattern continued, as shown in the Old Testament, developing into the practice of praying three times a day at specific hours. David (see Psalm 55:17) and Daniel (see Daniel 6:10) are examples, while Jeremiah gives us a glimpse into the public prayer space ("the house of the people," Jeremiah 39:8) dedicated to this sacrificial prayer practice in the first Temple. Ezekiel prophesied that there would be such prayer spaces designated for fixed-hour prayers in the Messianic temple, the New Testament church (see Ezekiel 37:26-38).

The Jewish prayers were indeed carried forward into the New Testament. For instance, the people prayed the prescribed passages of Scripture outside while Zechariah offered incense inside the Temple at the "hour of incense" (Luke 1:10). The apostles also fulfilled Ezekiel's prophecy of prayer times and spaces, as told in the book of Acts (3:1), where we see they observed the traditional hours of prayer, even going to the Temple to do so, until they were excommunicated for their Christian faith.

For the early Christians, morning prayer coincided with the morning sacrifice observed at the Temple in Jerusalem at

the third hour, or nine o'clock in the morning (see Acts 2:15). Midday prayer was at the sixth hour, or noon, and may have coincided with the thanksgiving blessing for the chief meal of the day (see Matthew 15:36; Acts 27:35). Evening prayer was paired with the evening sacrifice, at the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon (see Acts 3:1, 10:30).

The Liturgy of the Hours

Eventually this way of praying with Scripture throughout the day was named the Liturgy of the Hours, or the Divine Office. The Word “liturgy” is from the Greek word *leitourgia*, meaning “a work of the people,” a public worship ceremony or ritual. Based on the fixed-hour prayers of Judaism, the Liturgy of the Hours, then (in its widest application), is the formal daily and yearly cycle that characterizes communal Christian prayer for the Catholic and Orthodox churches and the liturgical denominations. It is a way of “keeping time” with God that reflects and carries forward the fixed-hour prayers of Judaism.

The traditional Christian hours are:

- Lauds (sunrise prayer, or “praises”)
- Prime (6:00 AM, morning prayer)
- Terce (9:00 AM, mid-morning prayer)
- Sext (noon or midday prayer)
- None (3:00 PM, afternoon prayer)
- Vespers (sunset, evening prayer)
- Compline (bedtime, night prayer)

This ancient prayer practice that reaches all the way back to ancient Judaism—which Mary would have known and taught Jesus to pray—connects us to God and to one another with God’s Word even today. Following the entire schedule ensures that you will pray all 150 psalms once each month. The readings from the Liturgy of the Hours and the Mass together cover the whole New Testament every year and include Old Testament readings that are important in salvation history.

When you consider the staggered time zones across the world, it’s easy to understand how, in the Catholic Church, the Liturgy of the Hours and the Mass are being prayed somewhere at every moment, as the clergy, diaconate, and religious orders commit to these daily, fixed-hour prayers on behalf of the universal Church every single day. As non-Jews keeping this discipline, the Church fulfills both Ezekiel’s Messianic temple prophecy and Malachi’s prophecy, “For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering” (Malachi 1:11).

The Liturgy of the Hours is truly interdenominational, because the prayers consist almost entirely of Holy Scripture. Praying these prayers is reading and praying Scripture with the mind of the Church. It keeps us in tune with what the Holy Spirit is creating and renewing in the universal Church, just as their daily prayers kept Mary and the apostles connected to his active, creative Word in their day.

If this is the first you’ve heard of such a discipline, you may consider it onerous or oppressive, but the practice is done with great love and devotion all over the world. Ongoing for millennia, this structured prayer for God’s people continues to be the backbone of worship for the whole Church

community. Without it, prayer would become an individual pick-and-choose practice that connects individuals to no one.

The full Liturgy of the Hours is rather demanding, since it involves pausing seven times a day for ten to fifteen minutes each time. My lay duties and station in life allow me to keep the practice by praying the morning prayers, Mass, and evening prayers all at once. Except for hymns, intercessions, and readings from the Church fathers and the saints, the Liturgy of the Hours is entirely scriptural, which means I hear from the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures every day, and so does every other Christian who keeps the practice.

For me, reaching that goal came through the discipline and practice developed through a heart of love and a longing to know God. When I was just beginning, when my discipline had progressed to the necessary stage, simple willpower had to kick in so I could push through the predictable seasons of dryness. However, the exciting news is that when I stay with the discipline, God shows up.

The Development of Lectio Divina

After the apostles were excommunicated and the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, Origen of Alexandria (AD 184–253), a Christian theologian of the early Church, is thought to have introduced a more conversational, contemplative practice of prayer with Scripture. His idea was more “Scripture as a sacrament” through which *Jesus* speaks, touches, and teaches. No one really knows who named the practice *lectio divina* (Latin for “sacred reading” or “divine reading”), but the process has always been

more about *experiencing* the Word than about studying it for knowledge or praying it in liturgy.

Classical *lectio divina* began before Bibles were printed, as a monastic practice of communal prayer when Benedictine brothers gathered at chapel each day. Because the printing press wasn't invented until the 1400s, no one was able to read Scripture independently because of their rarity and immense value. Until then, Bibles were hand copied by monks and often chained to an ambo, or pulpit, to prevent theft. Personal copies did not exist, and illiteracy was so pervasive that only the wealthy and educated could have read one. So instead, the Benedictine brothers gathered to listen to the readings. They felt the Spirit and understood that they were hearing the Word of God, much as Mary heard God's Word through the angel. They listened to Scripture with their hearts, as the Word of God, "squeezing from it, so to speak, all its 'juice,' so that it may nourish meditation and contemplation and, like water, succeed in irrigating life itself," as Pope Benedict described it.⁵

Later, in the twelfth century, the stages classically considered essential to *lectio divina* were formalized into four steps: *lectio* ("reading"), *meditatio* ("meditation"), *oratio* ("prayer"), and *contemplatio* ("contemplation"). *Lectio divina* continues to be, as Pope Benedict called it, "a wellspring of constant renewal" in the Church.⁶

⁵ Benedict XVI, Sunday Angelus (November 6, 2005), vatican.va.

⁶ Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (September 30, 2010), vatican.va/.

YOU, MARY, AND SCRIPTURE

According to Pope Benedict, praying like Mary is more than simply hearing or reading the Word. Mary is the “model for prayer,” the mother of prayer with the Word, because of her “deep bond with God that developed in assiduous and intense prayer.”⁷ Mary’s lifelong, personal practice of attentive listening shows how practically and beautifully she illustrated the traditional steps of *lectio divina*. She would have prayed with the Word, and she loved the Word of God so that it came alive within her and was born into the world. As we will see, she guides us with a sure hand in how to do the same.

Like Our Lady, we actively seek a deep relationship with God in his Word on a daily basis as a spiritual discipline. We ponder circumstances and events in his presence so that we can entrust them all to him and remain in an attitude of deep peace. *Come, Holy Spirit*. As was true for Mary, the Word that we hear and read today is a gift from God in answer to our prayers. Our lives throb with gratitude and joy, and burst with anticipation for all we encounter.

When we use the method that the Church has known and taught for centuries, and follow Mary’s example of listening and entrusting—when we begin approaching the readings as God’s Word to us, direct communication to us about our individual lives—Scripture will come alive for us and make us bearers of Christ into the world.

The saints have always said that the best way to begin in Scripture is to pray with them in *lectio divina*, but the ancient Latin terms can make *lectio* seem more inaccessible than it is. Therefore, we will learn and practice a method

⁷ Benedict XVI, “Without Mary There Is No Church,” general audience, March 14, 2012, *L’Osservatore Romano*, March 21, 2012, 3, available at etwn.com.

without the Latin, using a simple acronym modeled on her Annunciation:

L–LISTEN, **O**–OBSERVE, **V**–VERBALIZE, **E**–ENTRUST

Pope Saint Paul VI stated that “in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the Word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life.”⁸

Indeed, the Scriptures have always been part of the “one table” of the Lord that animates and nourishes the life of the believer:

The Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord’s Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the *one table* of God’s Word and Christ’s Body.

In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, “but as what it really is, the word of God.” In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them. (CCC 103–104, emphasis added)

We may not be called to engage in the entire demanding schedule of fixed-hour prayer in order to be intimate with the Holy Spirit, but Mary models and the Church teaches that daily nourishment in the Scriptures is an absolute necessity. Following Mary’s example with disciplined and consistent prayer and joining with the worldwide Church community through the Mass readings particularly invites and facilitates God’s powerful action in our lives. Mary

⁸ Paul VI, *Dei verbum* (November 18, 1965), vatican.va/.

demonstrated that intimacy with the Holy Spirit occurs through praying with Scripture.

Because she prayed the prayers of her people, Mary had assimilated the Old Testament Scriptures so completely that when she opened her mouth to praise God, what erupted as praise was Scripture.⁹ Her spontaneous song of gratitude for God's miraculous answer to her prayers is the crown of Old Testament prayer and Scripture, the last of the Old Testament and the first of the New Testament.

Because Mary, as the mother of Jesus, our Savior, was the first to experience and extend salvation to the world, she is also an icon of both ancient Israel and the universal Church. Every soul, whether male or female, *receives* from God, so regardless of gender or temperament, Mary is our model of prayer with the Word.

When I asked Mary to help me understand my bishop's assertion that my relationship to her is the measure of my Catholic faith, I had no idea that her singing heart would reveal the Holy Spirit's own intense desire for, and invitation to, a deeper, more consuming intimacy with me. Your own desire to pray like Mary is her invitation to a deeper intimacy with the Holy Spirit.

As we allow our "mother of prayer" to guide us, we discover how usefully and beautifully she helps us pray the Scriptures. Mary teaches us how to begin, sustain, deepen, and anticipate hearing God speak through his Word on a daily basis. Mary loves the Word of God so that it comes alive within her and is born into the world, and she guides us with love in how to do the same. In the coming chapters, we will learn the steps.

⁹ Jesus did something similar in his frequent application of certain Scriptures to his ministry and specific actions, especially the psalms he prayed from the Cross.

LET'S REVIEW

Let's review what Mary teaches us about prayer.

- *Mary is calling us to deeper prayer through the Scriptures.*
- *“The Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord’s Body” (CCC 103, emphasis added).*
- *Sacred Scripture is the Word of God (see CCC 104).*
- *God is always speaking through his Word.*
- *We can follow the example Mary set during the Annunciation through the pattern of **LOVE the Word**: **L**–listen, **O**–observe, **V**–verbalize, **E**–entrust.*
- *If we commit to a daily discipline in LOVE the Word, God promises to speak there.*

INVITATION

St. Augustine once said of his relationship with the Lord, “Late have I loved thee.”¹⁰ I came to a Catholic relationship with Mary and the Bible late, but under Mary’s guidance, my prayer practice has developed a singular power that nourishes me and propels me forward in my life. In following her lead, she is answering my most constant, fervent prayer: *Lord, I just want to be a fire in your hand.*

¹⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2006), 210.

As we embark on the most exciting endeavor of our lives, seeking God’s face in the Scriptures every day, “may Our Lady teach us to welcome the Word of God fully, not only through intellectual research, but in our whole life.”¹¹

GOD PROMPT

Practice LOVE the WORD

Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you through the following passage from Proverbs 26:11, then read the passage slowly and reflectively (with full attention), emphasizing one word of the verse in turn until you have stressed them all. This will help the words to really sink in. Consider reading the passage aloud.

L–Listen (*Receive the Word.*)

“**Like** a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.”

“Like a **dog** that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.”

“Like a dog that **returns** to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.”

“Like a dog that returns to **his** vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.”

“Like a dog that returns to his **vomit** is a fool who repeats his folly.”

“Like a dog that returns to his vomit **is** a fool who repeats his folly.”

¹¹ Pope Francis, Address to the Italian Biblical Association (September 12, 2014), vatican.va/.

O–Observe (*Place yourself in the narrative, imagining every detail.*)

My “vomit” is rage. What is your “vomit”? What dirty, disgusting, or foolish habit or relationship do you instinctively return to over and over again? Have you done so recently? What is God saying to you about that destructive, instinctive behavior through this verse?

V–Verbalize (*Pray about your thoughts and emotions.*)

What does he want you to do now? Spend a few moments talking to God about the feelings and thoughts that arise in your heart right now.

E–Entrust (*May it be done to me according to your Word!*)

Perhaps you’d like to simply rest in God’s presence for a moment and entrust your future to him anew.

