

## **NOTES ON CRITICAL READING: “Feasting on the Word” (based on the Benedictine’s Lectio Davino)**

*How should I live my life? One of humanity’s fundamental questions is personalized and focused in the reading of literature. In these different voices and texts, we find other options and ideas for the way we can live, personally and as a community.*

### *Step One: Read Lightly.*

Allow images, ideas, sentences, phrases, single words catch your attention. Let there be free association in your mind. Make note of any of these words or ideas, go back and re-read them and see what kind of phrase they are in. Look up any words you don’t know. You might simply love a word for no obvious reason.

Allow this.

### *Step Two: Read for Action.*

If you like, write down what you think is taking place in the text, whether this means literal action (a man and woman are fighting over money), or simply thoughts or ideas or memories on the part of the author (a woman is drinking tea and thinking about her husband, OR it might be something more abstract, like a woman is comparing her husband to a tidal wave). Even understanding one single section can be a pleasure. Reading aloud will help.

### *Step Three: Read for Connection.*

Can you connect with this author’s ideas in any ways? Do you feel anything at all about this text? Do you feel sympathetic or scornful or interested or sympathetic towards action, images, or ideas in the text? Are they saying something you believe in or something you disagree with? Do you feel like the text is unclear? Do you find anything beautiful in the text? Is there figurative language? Does this increase your understanding?

### *Step Four: Read for Contemplation.*

Does the author give you an image of something you didn’t have before? Did they say something that surprised you? What do you think is the theme of their text? What are your value assumptions about the text? Does this text reflect on the way you want to, or don’t want to, live your life?

**Theme**-a repeated, unifying thought running through a text (why did the author write it?)

**Contemplation**-the act of looking at something for a long time, deep reflective thought

**Value Assumptions-** This applies to the READER only. This refers to the beliefs and ideas that underlie our behavior and attitudes, and inform our opinions and conclusions. We must be aware of our assumptions when reading (men should never \_\_\_\_\_, or a woman wouldn't \_\_\_\_\_), and allow them to fall away.

**Cognitive Dissonance-** This is an experience the READER may encounter if the ideas or form of a given text do not match with the READER's expectations or ideology. The temptation might be to stop reading or to pull away, but if you experience the dissonance and continue anyway, this can be a rich area for exploration. When something bothers us and we try to make sense of it, it can expand our way of thinking.

### **Figurative Language**

**Metaphor-**a comparison of two dissimilar things without using "like" or "as" (for example: *She is a fox. The man is an angel. His voice thundered over us.*)

**Simile-**using "like" or "as" to compare two dissimilar things (for example: *She sleeps like a log. He arrived like an angel.*)