

Praying with Music: Audio Divina

Sacred Listening*

For many of us, music is often a transcendent experience. Consider using music as a doorway into prayer and cultivating your ability to listen with the ear of your heart.

Preparation

Choose a piece of music that you will be listening to - something that you find moving. Find a quiet place and take some time to settle into stillness. Breathe in an awareness of God's presence, breathe out distractions and worries.

First Hearing: Listen

Play the piece of music once to enter into its landscape. Allow the music to fill you, breathing it in. If there is a dominant sound or image or feeling calling to you in this initial experience, allow a few moments of silence to follow and savor that image or feeling rising up in you.

Second Hearing: Reflect

Play the music a second time. Now allow the sound or image or feeling that first called to you to draw you more deeply into the experience of it. Allow it to unfold in your imagination. Notice how the experience of listening to the music touches your heart. What memories does it stir in you? What are the feelings rising up in your body? What images are you aware of? Become more deeply aware of how the music is flowing through you and what is being evoked. Rest for a few minutes in silence following the end of the piece, resting in what has moved in you.

Third Hearing: Respond

Play the music a third time. This time focus on how your heart wants to respond to being touched. What is the invitation present in the unfolding of sounds, images, memories, and feelings for you today? How is God speaking to your life in this moment through this music? If you feel comfortable, take a moment to express with your voice what you are experiencing in your body. It might be a simple sound or a line from a song or something you have created in the moment. What does your "yes" to God sound like this day?

Resting with God

Spend some time resting in silence and releasing the sounds, feelings, and images that are stirring in you. Close your eyes for a few minutes and rest in the stillness in simple awareness of God's presence. Allow yourself some time to simply be. Open yourself to gratitude for whatever has been revealed and offered in this time of prayer.

Closing

If you keep a journal, write down some reflections on your experience, making note of what stirred in you.

Music has an incredible power in our lives that perhaps originates from our very heartbeat, that primordial life-sustaining rhythm. Over time as you cultivate your ability to hear in a deeper way, consider using other music you love and with which you are drawn to pray. Begin to notice how you listen to your life in a deeper way.

* Adapted from Christine Valters Paintner, January 01, 2000 patheos.com

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