

Some Thoughts on the Divine...and Sacred

Please note that this essay is divided into two parts though by no means is the distinction between them hard and fast. One is meant to flow into the other and visa versa. First we have a discussion concerning the two Latin adjectives *divinus* and *sacer* (divine and sacred) relative to the practice of *lectio divina*. Secondly the discussion moves into a perception of the divine and sacred as more generally perceived but with special reference to the **Rule** of St. Benedict dating from the fourth century. In sum, *lectio divina* is a unique way of doing spiritual reading (Scripture, mostly), and the **Rule** governs the way of life a monk lives in community as well as offering support for this reading. The divine and therefore God cannot be divided up into one part here and another part over there. However, the reflections presented here can take these two broad paths which ultimately are one.

When doing an update for the introductory page to the Lectio Divina site about two years ago, I hit upon an obvious distinction that had been lost to me. That is to say, I saw more clearly the difference between two Latin adjectives relative to the sacred, *divinus* and *sacer*, the former being applied to the (feminine) noun *lectio*. While these two words are easily understandable because of their similarity to their corresponding English terms, I was curious to know why *sacer* (*sacra*, feminine) is not used to modify *lectio* which would give us *sacra divina*. On the surface it seemed more natural. That curiosity led to making some inquiries from friends and acquaintances more informed than I. However, no one came up with a satisfactory answer even though people with an in depth knowledge of Latin are aware of the distinction between the two adjectives. *Divinus* belongs to a divinity (first the Roman gods and later the Judeo-Christian God) more properly speaking while *sacer* is applied to that which is dedicated or consecrated to the divinity.¹ In sum, the former seems to apply to that which is strictly transcendent whereas the latter to things related to God such as liturgical rites, utensils and places. In other words, *sacer* is one step (or more) removed from *divinus*. When you stop to think of it—and provided you're not an outright polytheist—you would hesitate to apply the adjective *divinus* to such items. If you went that route, you get two results: either 1) objects would be too loaded with the divine for humans to handle, whereas anything *sacer* allows for closer familiarity...in sum, something you can handle without getting burned or 2) you're attempting to equate creation with the creator.

This rather subtle distinction revealed by two Latin adjectives may seem superfluous or even incomprehensible with regard to modern day society where everything has become so secular.² Like

¹We have a third common adjective, *sanctus*, which often translates as holy but fundamentally means to be inviolable, venerable.

²An in depth treatment of this is found in **A Secular Age** by Charles Taylor. By no means is it an easy read!

so many tenets of Western Civilization, the influence of religion has fallen out of favor quite rapidly...within a generation or two...and shows no signs of being recovered. It collapsed so quickly, just like a house of cards, so that a lot of people are wondering just how deeply rooted it had been. This admittedly embarrassing issue has been little explored, perhaps because the process of secularization is still making greater inroads or we remain caught up in the immediate after effects of this process. At the same time we hear all the time about the great interest in things spiritual as opposed to that which is religious, the latter usually evocative of modern day Pharisaism. It has become an unbroken record played over and over again but with few suggestions as how to effect such a recovery (Actually no one seems to know). And this doesn't mean going back to former practices and dragging them into the present. Some are trying that today; it has limited value and interest but doesn't seem suitable for ongoing growth and development. The same applies to more esoteric forms of spirituality. They arise from time to time but have no staying power. So against a background of both confusion and hope this small essay attempts to explore in greater detail the distinction between *divinus* and *sacer*. Granted, for a larger audience we're dealing with a minor issue but for anyone familiar with monastic practice it is significant because monks live in an environment especially set up to dispose them more readily for union with God.

Since quite a few people are interested in the above mentioned recovery of religious values, I'll stick with one application pertaining to the overall theme of this home page, the practice of *lectio divina*. As pointed out in several articles, *lectio* is a special way of reading sacred texts, notably Scripture. It is done in a deliberately slow fashion where the goal isn't to cover material but to sound the text as deeply as possible. Once you've tried your hand at this, you're more disposed to rest in God's presence. This is followed a little bit later by returning to the text, alternating between the two (which turns out to be one and the same). Perception of time's passage is essentially irrelevant here. You're not doing *lectio* according to the clock. You know you're in the presence of God by the peace and joy that comes upon you unexpectedly, this being confirmed through renewed inspiration from the scriptures. In other words, *lectio divina* ratifies the silent presence which has come upon you and brings it another step forward.

For centuries this had been practiced but has become close to impossible in the modern world. Even a stab at *lectio* reveals how we've come to give primacy to the processing of information as quickly as possible after which we move onto the next tidbit of information and so forth *ad infinitum*. It's the very antithesis of the alteration between *lectio divina* and silent prayer. Overcoming the temptation to speed along therefore is the biggest culprit. As for "processing," we don't know what that means, really, despite its frequent use. Most likely it pertains to satisfying the basic criteria for getting something out there to understand as quickly as possible after which it's given a pass. In other words,

the important faculty of our memory, our recollective function, is minimized.³ This is the hidden illness, if you will, that affects many of us. We have lost the ability to retain information in our memories and now are relying on artificial or technological means. The Big Question is, what will happen when someone pulls the plug and there's no electricity to support our crutches?

So our uniquely modern situation intimates that sensitivity for the *divinus* has been pretty much knocked out of our awareness, often in an unceremonious and dismissive fashion. At the same time there's a residual desire for it which appears inbred. One way we see this desire triggered is by a fairly universal attraction to the practice of *lectio divina*. It's common knowledge that one of the chief culprits for dulling our sensitivity is technology...neutral in and by itself...which seduces us with a Siren song that never ceases. Most of society has bought into this song completely which creates an unexpected boon, an advantage waiting to be cashed in. Those few people who have opted to close their ears to this modern Siren song are left alone and untroubled. Even better, they're ignored and thus not subject to persecution. What's near and dear to them isn't even on the radar screen of the majority of the population, even people who otherwise might be hostile to them. On the other end of the spectrum are those who wish to reconsider old practices. This gets attention because it's far more obvious and has a certain militancy about it. So finding one's spiritual way in a wired world requires some skill. Once you've learned to live in this new situation you can flourish, especially when you're not technologically tied in. No one can track you down. A simple solution, obviously, but one requiring determination to pursue.

The ancient practice of interest here is *lectio divina* whose Latin adjective, *divinus*, is widely accepted as being descriptive of God, the fundamental take-off point of any renewal related to things spiritual and religious. Once this basic premise is accepted, we can advance to the noun it modifies, and that noun is, of course, *lectio* which fundamentally means a gathering or collecting. We can build on this meaning and say the practice at hand is a "gathering" or a "collecting." It, in turn, is described as being "divine." Quite a statement if we keep in mind the theological implications of this adjective. Taken literally, our gathering/collecting...our reading...is done in a divine (*divinus*) fashion, not one which is *sacer*. If this practice were done in a manner which is *sacer*, it would be, if you will, related to God but somewhat removed from him. The degree of separation doesn't have to be spelled out but is inferred by the already described difference between the two adjectives. Thus we have in a nutshell an experience most people have had over the millennia and continue to do right down to the present, namely, that God is both *divinus* (distant or transcendent) and *sacer* (close, with varying degrees). The trouble, however, is that this distinction is not understood nowadays as had been the case in the

³Anamnesis is the Greek term for this recollective faculty, extremely important for the ancients, as the dwelling place not just of knowledge but of our very identity.

past, let alone the meaning of each term.

And so we've come to the conclusion early on that any *lectio* which is *divina* is not reading which sounds like a contradiction. After all, we're invited to consider a text⁴ in a way not only different but almost alien to conventional understanding. To engage in *lectio*-as-gathering means we have to acclimatize ourselves to what appears as a new practice but one with a long and venerable history. We don't just pick it up and drop it at leisure as an oddity for our entertainment. This means we need a kind of educative process even before we sit down with a text. It involves the un-learning of now familiar ways of acquiring information with less emphasis upon technological aides, more painful than first imagined, because it goes against the grain of what become even without our knowing it. Therefore at the risk of being repetitive, the un-learning consists of that ability to read slowly, a point that can't be emphasized enough.

At the heart of our *lectio* (i.e., our gathering) is an option for that which doesn't belong to the secular realm or to put it a bit differently, for those things which belong to the present age or *saeculum*. This choice presupposes, of course, that we perceive a reality alternate to our familiar one which seems absurd to many people. Older folks who recall their religious upbringing from an early age retain a sensitivity to reading connected with their faith, but it is in constant danger of being swept under the rug due to the all-powerful pull of secular influences. They find themselves in an ever increasing minority among younger folks not sharing this faith but who nonetheless are interested in things spiritual. Yet that feeling is splattered all over the place and lacks clarity of direction which means a person has to collect or gather himself first, the fundamental meaning of *lectio*. Only with sustained focus does such effort become *divinus* or divine, a fact we become aware of and may be tempted to think is of our own making but is not. Thus *lectio divina* becomes the practice *par excellance* of a person made in the image and likeness of God...one who has become divinized, as claimed by Eastern Orthodox traditions and finds expression of this dual nature in the slow, meditative reading of Scripture. Such is the conclusion of the first half of this little essay which leads to the second half which touches upon the fruits of *lectio divina*.

It's helpful to keep in mind that *lectio divina* had its origins in monasteries, an ideal situation for its practice, which can be a template for persons wishing to imitate it in their own non-monastic settings. A desire for this is the subject of the second half of this essay which situates *lectio* in the context of the **Rule** of St. Benedict where both the divine and the sacred are integrated into daily life.

⁴In older times most people listened to the text which meant a greater involvement was required to retain what in essence was so fleeting, the human voice. At the same time this voice communicated the text in a personal fashion...simply because a person was reading it. All this is very important and worth exploring further. It has a lot to bear on *lectio divina*, but here is not the place to go into that.

Already we've posited the *divinus* as directly pertinent to God, the same adjective modifying *lectio*, quite remarkable and deserving of long and hard reflection.⁵ We can't spend all our time doing *lectio* (though St. Benedict prescribed ample time for it way back then) despite being very important. After all, our *lectio* is *divinus*, divine...of God. Because we can't live continuously in the *divinus* mode but must work for a living with all that entails, surely when engaged in these mundane practices we have a nostalgia for the *divinus*, that we've left behind something extraordinarily precious. And that spurs on to further practice. We may have to alternate between *lectio* and work for a period of time before seeing the deeper connection which means that in the meanwhile we have to endure a rather sharp dichotomy between the two. After a while an uneasy truce is established interspersed with insights into the deeper connection between both. Anyone can maintain that yes, all creation is holy, but to see it such challenges us on a very deep level of commitment.

Turning more specifically to the monastic way of life, we see that virtually every society and culture has or has had it in one form or another. Certain images automatically come to mind when you hear this word, of men squirreled away from society chanting day and night and not looking very happy about it. Besides, the way they file and file out of church bespeaks an anonymity that goes against modern sensibility yet at the same time fascinates. So if we cut through all this and examine monasticism⁶ in light of its most specific practice...no, not the Divine Office which gets all the attention because it's so obvious...but *lectio divina*, we see the core around which this way of life has been established and draws life continuously. Monks don't live off charity but work for a living, an essential part of St. Benedict's **Rule** so they have to get out and earn their upkeep. Surprisingly, Benedict has only one reference to *lectio divina*, a practice generally attributable to Origen (third century) in the context of manual work as found in Chapter Forty-Eight (On the Daily Manual Labor): *Otiositas inimica est animæ, et ideo certis temporibus occupari debent fratres in labore manuum, certis iterum horis in lectione divina*. "Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brethren should be occupied at certain times in manual labor, and at other fixed hours in holy

⁵Perhaps the best example with which *lectio divina* can be compared is the way Jews, especially Hasidic Jews, read the Torah and books related to it. They have an intensity and devotion rarely seen among Christians, let alone Catholics. This devotion to study and prayer (the two are one for the Hasidim) is all consuming yet spills over into other areas of their lives. Obviously the richness of the Hebrew language is a contributing factor here.

⁶Benedictine monasticism is the chief focus here which has been pervasive in Western cultures. Most inhabitants of these monasteries are faithful to *lectio*, very much so, a fact you'll never get to see first hand, even if you live in a monastery. It used to be done in common but nowadays individually in the monks' cells. The onslaught of a secular society hasn't made these good people immune to the vices of speed reading or word processing, though they have greater resources to combat them than folks living in society. Then again, it all comes down to one's insight and determination whether inside or outside the monastery.

reading.”

In pre-technological days the transition from being in the presence of the *divinus* to working wasn't difficult since the monks made their living through manual labor. It was done in a natural surrounding, even if indoors, where mechanical noise was absent. Such work was a logical outcome of both being in church as well as doing *lectio divina*. Nowadays it's virtually impossible to live like that due to life's complexity. Yet monks retain a major advantage. They continue to follow a pre-Industrial Revolution life style. That means they live and work in the same place and do not make a distinction between home and place of employment. Another modern notion such as retirement is equally alien. How can you retire from the home in which you've been living most of your life? The same is applicable to vacations. While monks work and often long and hard, there's no work real atmosphere, hence many less tensions which require you from the need to take a break. Still, monks are prone to boredom, and that shouldn't be breezed over.

So let's say a monk has spent a good number of hours (usually early in the morning or what most people would call the middle of the night) engaged in *lectio divina* and the Office. At or around eight o'clock it's time to head to work which invariably means the *divinus* of his *lectio* is bound to accompany the monk even if he's not fully aware of this. At this juncture memory as *anamnesis* kicks in, if you will. *Anamnesis* is a more technical term which the ancient Greeks considered to be essential to one's identity and which rooted him in the larger community.⁷ The monks in general are aware of this which makes the community unique in that each member strives as best as possible to bring what he had read into the work environment. No small wonder that any layperson who had resided in the monastery, even for a weekend retreat, picks this up and comes away quite envious of this gift. And so the time outside *lectio* and church related activities means spending time in an environment not directly impinged upon that which is *divinus*. By its very nature this environment can't be *divinus*. If we tried to make it so (sometimes a temptation), we'd be attempting to force, albeit in subtle fashion, the divine into the world and the world into the Divine. So the conclusion naturally reached is that the world in which the monk operates is *sacer* or sacred. Earlier that term was defined as being secondary to *divinus*...not inferior but a step back from its intensity, if you will. By its very nature, any work in the monastery...physical or behind as desk...is *sacer*, not *divinus*.

The **Rule** speaks at some length about the cellarer or person in charge of the monastery's temporal affairs who in many ways is more important than the abbot. By nature of his leadership role the abbot is somewhat removed from the nitty-gritty affairs of his monks whereas the cellarer deals with them on a one-to-one basis, namely, work assignments and the like. We could say that this monk

⁷An article on *anamnesis* may be found on this home page.

holds special place by his ability to see the interplay between the *divinus* and the *sacer*. A monk may not have this insight before assuming that position but many who have held it say a certain grace comes to them, one they haven't had before. It has the added benefit of getting them through the heavy burden of responsibilities.

A sentence from the **Rule** (Chapter Thirty-One, 'On the Cellarer of the Monastery') puts this role into proper perspective and is worth closer examination, but first let's give the sentence which outlines the position of the cellarer: *Omnia vasa monasterii cunctamque substantiam ac si altaris vasa sacrata conspiciat. Nihil ducat neglegendum.* "Let him look upon all the vessels and goods of the monastery as though they were the consecrated vessels of the altar. He is not to consider anything negligible." Note the two objects of the cellarer's attention, *vas* and *substantia* which translate here as "vessels" and "good" or utensils and implements of any kind along with substance. The former suggests items used to effect something and the latter is more general and inclusive, that of which a thing consists. The cellarer is to "look upon" both, *conspicio*—to perceive or observe with attention—and to do so as though they are *vasa* which have been "consecrated" or *sacro*...made sacred...for the altar. He is to be lead or guided (*duco*), if you will, into not neglecting this special way of cherishing the physical objects at the monastery's disposal among which are finances, very "secular" objects and things which are more abstract by reason of their computer/software related nature.

This sentence just outlined from St. Benedict's **Rule** is significant insofar as it allows the monk to make the transit from *divinus*...*lectio divina*...from the divine (as related to reading) to physical objects and activity within the monastery as *sacro* (consecrated), this being the verbal root for the adjective *sacer*. So here we have the already outlined step of going from something wholly other to a step or two removed from it though not in the negative sense. While applied specifically to the cellarer, he can be inferred as an agent within the monastery to make his fellow monks away of this shift so that all can partake of it.

So where does the actual shift from *divinus* to the *sacer* take place, if we may put it this way? One good place to start is with the small Latin words *ac si* translated "as though" (or 'as if'). These words place the verb *conspicio*, that which is doing the action, as the agent of change. *Conspicio* has a twofold regard: first the plain, ordinary *vas* and *substantia* of the monastery and secondly, the same word *vas* (but not *substantia*) as relative to the various objects for celebration of Mass. So the shift begins (through the cellarer, if you will) with the focused gaze of *conspicio* which we could say is employed in the practice of *lectio divina* and moves it over to the realm of physical objects which is *sacer*. *Conspicio* sees no distinction between the two, for the physical objects enable the celebration of Mass. *Divinus* flows out to *sacer* and *sacer* flows back to *divinus*, the two feeding into each other continuously. Thus the monk's day is an alteration between two modes of existence. One is wholly

other and the second enables this transcendence to permeate his world. Keeping both in balance is tricky and requires constant diligence but well worth the effort.

This balance enables a monk to live his life without being crushed by the divine nor lost in the details of the monastery's upkeep. Actually we're dealing with a problem that confronts a lot of people living a spiritual life. They're caught in a dualism that consists of a keen awareness of God's presence (an awareness which is *divinus*) from which flows an equally keen awareness of one's faults as they are played out in daily life (the realm of the *sacer*). Part of this dilemma stems from an attachment to form which we often we judge as deficient, and naturally enough that puts one within a domain that's formal. Or to put it another way, we tend to seek solutions to our problem which are formal. The way out is to withdraw from this inbuilt preference to form as well as solutions found in that realm, solutions that are (obviously) formal.⁸ So round and round this person goes, finding solutions which are only stop-gap measures to symptoms instead of getting beyond form to the informal. And that realm is immune to any problems or dilemmas we may fabricate. Most of us fail to go that route because of an inbuilt fear which arises from tacit injunctions from society, culture and religion not to trespass any kind of form they offer. If you do, a severe penalty will be paid.

A consideration of the overlooked words *ac si* ('as though') which bridge *vas* and *substantia* with *vas...altaris* offers a way out of this no-win situation. At heart both are one and the same but quite different to the cellarer, if you will, whom Benedict posits as endowed with the gift of *conspicio*. *Ac si* serve as a bridge between the two realms and evoke some insights from Hans Vaihinger who actually write about this rather interesting subject.⁹ It's helpful to keep in mind that we're dealing with the transition from *divinus* to *sacer* or to put it in more contemporary terms, how to perceive the sacred in the physical reality. Vaihinger explore various ways in which his famous "as if" (or our *ac si*, pretty much the same) takes a familiar experience familiar and projects it onto that which unfamiliar...i.e., a mapping process. In sum, he proposes that we project this familiarity onto the unknown and come up with an insight joining the two when spontaneously we exclaim "as if." Actually it's quite common if you examine your personal experience. For example, a person who has

⁸This is an extremely important point that will be covered later. At the same time it's subject to a lot of misunderstanding. Attachment to form and that which is formal seems the reason why people are turned off by religion and its teachings. Perhaps insights into consciousness may help but sometimes the mere mention of this word sets off alarm bells in many people, very interesting to explore why.

⁹Hans Vaihinger (September 25, 1852 – December 18, 1933) was a German philosopher, best known as a Kant scholar and for his *Die Philosophie des Als Ob* (The Philosophy of 'As If'), published in 1911, but written more than thirty years earlier. It is available in English. A short essay on him is found on this same home page, so the essay at hand is not the place to go into it except to help the argument along.

ascended a hill...not a mountain...and upon taking in the view says “I feel as if I’m on top of the world.” Top of the world, of course, is Mount Everest, a place most likely one hasn’t been nor is likely to visit. Yet this person experiencing exultation has some knowledge of Mount Everest garnered through reading, the Internet or television. When he reaches the summit of his modest hill with the view spontaneously and unreflectively there comes to mind an association of it with Everest. At the same time he knows the two are very different. Vaihinger would say using Mount Everest to describe this hill is a fictive device.¹⁰ We pull out examples either from personal experience or what we’ve acquired through knowledge (input from any and all sources) and apply it to the situation at hand, in this instance our modest hill.

This little diversion into Vaihinger’s little known but intriguing “as if” as a fictive device can be put at the service of filtering that which is *divinus* into that which is *sacer*. While it’s beyond human capacity to handle the *divinus*, that being proper to God alone, we can gather our thoughts about it (of course the *divinus* transcends thought), even if they’re fanciful, and posit them in a reality we know. And that reality is the sacred (*sacer*) realm where we can use our imagination more freely. Here so many things...“stuff”...can be used at the service of *divinus* without violating its sovereignty. While we make use of various forms, they are now less tightly nailed down and are more fluid. In other words forms have become fictive devices which doesn’t mean they lack substance, but we are less inclined to make them absolutes. That which is *divinus*...without form...can flow more freely into that which is *sacer*...with form...and visa versa.

Let’s apply this to a concrete example in a monastic setting. Physically speaking the buildings and property are comprised of the same material as found elsewhere in the world. Nevertheless, many people claim that they’ve entered a different realm even when stepping onto the monastic grounds, let alone inside the church. Here, of course, is material for a fictive device according to Vaihinger: “I feel *as if* I’ve stepped into heaven.” The person who utters this has a notion of heaven even though he hasn’t been there yet associates it with everything good and true. You can reverse this experience by being aware of crossing from the enclosure to the “world” even if it’s the precise physical boundary or property line. Some have actually experimented with this. They’ve gone out in the woods away from any artificial boundary except perhaps a “posted” sign or an old stone wall. You stand on the monastic ground and walk over to the neighboring property. Same landscape, sounds and all the rest. Even if you did this blindfolded...and this is hypothetical, pushing it a bit...chances are that you would still perceive the difference in places. The monastic side of the fence is not greener in the proverbial sense but more has a more peaceful texture. It’s something you feel with your whole

¹⁰Note use of the noun “device” which connotes an aid. That is modified by the adjective “fictive” meaning that which we’ve invented or fashioned for the situation at hand.

being, almost to the point of tasting it.

So while a monk is engaged in some occupation or out in the fields, he is doing all this within the same environment and will continue to do so from the day he entered until the day he dies. That's highly unusual nowadays and becoming more so in an increasingly mobile society. That means a monk has to do some creative experimentation, perhaps come up with new fictive devices, if you will, depending upon his ingenuity. In other words, the monk must learn how to travel while standing still. He sees jet contrails overhead, on occasion hears distant traffic and wonders where all these people are going while he's "stuck" in this one place. He is like that still point around which the world revolves, a worn out example but certainly true. And strange to say, the more a monk resides within his monastery, the less he desire to travel in the physical sense. Over the years he learns to engage in a transitus from the *divinus* to the *sacer* and back again. All this is effected not space but in time. And this time is radically different from the "world," so radical that we can designate it *sacer-*(sacred) time.¹¹

For the monk time is more important by reason of his vow of stability, his staying-put in one place all the time. You can't do this successfully over the long haul if your focus is upon plain old linear time, of marking time month after month, year after year. Thus another dimension of time is called for, and that is the liturgical one which operates seamlessly within the linear one. The monk experiences this on a daily basis through the Divine Office which has an incredible variety of feast days, celebrations and so-called Ordinary Time which isn't ordinary in the conventional sense. Liturgical times spreads out into seasons...not just the seasonal ones (spring, winter, summer and fall) which is the chief measure by which the monk time-travels. In the concrete this means a monk begins with the Advent season, moves into the Christmas season and so forth until it loops back again for a fresh start. All the while he is doing his *lectio* which is *divina* followed by daily, mundane work which gradually assumes a character that is *sacer*:

Throughout the liturgical "clock" of seasonal movements or passing through blocks of time which are set off for a particular purpose, the sacred nature of Sunday stands out. This is true not just for the monk but for many Christians where there's greater access to things divine or the holy. As commonly known, Sundays stand out as the day God rested from his creation which took six days. It is felt more within a particular liturgical season (Lent, for example) yet retains its basic identity as the day of Christ's resurrection. Thus Sunday succeeds Sunday and so forth without end. Actually "without

¹¹A monk is drawn to literature which is sacred, etc. Yet a favorite source of inspiration are the writings of Henry David Thoreau, a monk of sorts. No small wonder that quite a few monks find inspiration in him, especially his **Journal** which is not as known as his other works.

end” is misleading because it gives the impression that time is endless and the monk is treading on a road to nowhere. However, that’s a view from “outside,” not from the “inside.” An invisible wall separates the two. The outsider can’t see inside but the insider can see out which essentially is what attracts many people to monasteries and why they find them so mysterious. For the inhabitants, however, it’s a different story which is how it should be. After having become so familiar with the above mentioned transitus from that which is *divinus* to that which is *sacer*, a monk is bound to have a perception of space and time outside the accept one. Attention to form loosens up, and he isn’t as concerned with as many things, even pressing issues. All things and all people come into existence, hang around a while and then pass off the scene. In the meanwhile the monk is firmly ensconced in his liturgical cycle with its various seasons. Even that loosens up with the passage of time which is why so many visitors find monks to be happy and freed up...not that they are protected from many of life’s vicissitudes but have learned to live in another dimension.

By way of conclusion I add a few brief remarks with regard to the title of this essay, *Some Thoughts on the Divine...and Sacred*. Note the three dots separating “Divine and Sacred.” That separation represents an after-thought, if you will, that I was questioning why the Latin adjective *divinus* is applied to *lectio*, a divine reading instead of *sacer*. It was only later that I asked why this second adjective wasn’t used. It seemed more appropriate at the time, that both words were pretty much the same, but later I became aware of their distinction. Thus the three periods (...) followed by “and Sacred” represent that questioning process. And that comprised the subject of this essay which explores the relationship of a “divine” contact with God through *lectio divina* and how it spills out into the monastic day thereby rendering the monk’s activities *sacer*.

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