



# Broken Body, Healing Spirit: Lectio Divina and Living with Illness

*Mary C. Earle*

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In the summer of 1995 Mary Earle returned from a vacation feeling refreshed and restored from her time away. A few days later, all that changed, when she was rushed to the emergency room with a case of acute and life-threatening pancreatitis. Being ill, she discovered, forces you to learn to live in whole new ways, ones often marked by limitation and fragility.

As a priest and spiritual director, Earle began to explore ways in which her own prayer life might help her build a different relationship with her illness. Using the Benedictine practice of lectio divina, or sacred reading, she began to "read" her own illness, and discovered a way of befriending and helping to heal--if not cure--her body and her life.

In *Broken Body, Healing Spirit*, Earle introduces this strategy to others who are hungry to find ways of living more fully despite chronic or serious illness or pain. Her practical, step-by-step approach to "reading the text of our illnesses," and learning to listen to what our bodies are trying to tell us will be of help to those who are currently suffering with disease or limitations, as well as to those who are caregivers and counselors.

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