

## Sacred Practices for *Ink and Honey* Readers

In the story of *Ink and Honey*, the Belle Coeur way of life is rich with ritual, prayer, craft-making, and spiritual practices. Drawing from the wisdom of the sisters of Belle Coeur, contemplate your life with regard to the following questions and suggested creative exercises.

Share your thoughts and experiences with your reading group or women's circle or use the questions as steppingstones for exploration in your journal.

- ❖ Do you have a ritual for examining your heart, a time for personal reflection to explore your relationship with God? What name (title) might you create for your ritual and sacred practice(s)?
- ❖ If you were to create an amulet, what intention would it represent? What would it be made of and look like? Make a sketch in your journal to represent your vision for your amulet.
- ❖ Goscelin's task as the Scribe of Belle Coeur is to keep a journal of the sisterhood's stories, prayers, songs, rituals and so on. Imagine composing your personal book of living wisdom as a work in progress. Contemplate how you might incorporate images that inspire your spirit. You may also want to add things found in nature as a way to honor God's Creation, along with your prayers, favorite recipes, rituals, and all manner of inspiration for your spirit.
- ❖ If you explore these exercises with a group, you're invited to co-create a collective group journal. You may decide to take turns as the scribe to record your group's stories, notes from your meetings, photographs, etc.
- ❖ Write a poem or song lyrics reflecting whatever your spirit is carrying, celebrating, healing, or contemplating at this time in your life. Think about incorporating this practice of poetry/song writing as an ongoing spiritual practice.
- ❖ Honeycake and mead wine, goat cheese, bread and root vegetable soup, are common foods at Belle Coeur. Is there a treasured recipe from your childhood that you have long forgotten? Think about recreating it or creating a new recipe imbued with prayer and special meaning. The idea is to immerse in the sacred art of cooking as spiritual practice. Give your recipe a name, and if you are sharing this process with a group, consider celebrating a co-creative meal where each participant brings her special creation to share as a sacred offering.
- ❖ The sisters of Belle Coeur wore clothing that was significant for their order. Their aprons, veils, and simple attire were outward signs of their connection and unification. For those

exploring *Ink and Honey* as a circle or group, is there a unifying article of clothing you might wear when you gather? Consider something as simple as a colorful shawl, a woven cord bracelet, or a common necklace or amulet. These outward symbols create inner unity. The symbol may be the same (such as a bracelet or shawl), but each woman may choose to select her own color or design. The beauty of diversity and the support of feeling unified are expressed in this way.

- ❖ What crafts belong to your feminine ancestral heritage? Did your grandmother knit or sew? Did your mother sing, paint, or dance? Explore your *herstory* to discover clues to knowing the craftswomen in your family for personal creative inspiration.
- ❖ Ravenissa's communication with animals is demonstrated throughout *Ink and Honey*. Explore your relationship with your pets and other creatures. If you have a pet, how do you communicate with your animal companion? Do you feel called to welcome a dog, cat, bird, fish or other creature into your life?
- ❖ Pilgrimage is another theme throughout *Ink and Honey*. Is there a sacred place you feel called to visit? If making an actual pilgrimage isn't possible at this time, you might choose to research the place on the Internet or through books at your local library. Make a collage in your journal to represent your intention for your pilgrimage.

Connect to the spirits of the sisters of Belle Coeur by walking. Take a walk in your neighborhood, a local park, or another neighborhood you've always wanted to explore. Be aware of what you see, hear, smell, touch, or taste, and also pay close attention to whatever surfaces intuitively. Take your journal along to record your reflections and gather found objects and things from nature as your journey. Consider making a monthly pilgrimage as spiritual practice.