Let us now go further into the “Three R” process...

Read the text; or, Review the image if it is a visual. It is important here to remember: the simpler the text, the better-- it doesn’t have to be involved or detailed or overladen with layers in which to become quagmired. If it is a text, limit it to a paragraph or shorter, and if an image, visual stimuli is good. Then, from either of these media, extract the essence of the object, or, one thought or image to which your mind goes most easily or quickly. The faster you do this— select the object, the better. You don’t want to be choosing many different objects during a meditation period, thus, spinning your inner wheels without solid foundation, never settling in due to lack of selection and focus.

The object of meditation can be, as we have said, textual or visual, explicitly religious (Christ himself, an angel or saint) or something simple, such as a flower or animal or peaceful mountain scene that might remind you of the Creator’s glory and power. This might be “religious” (implicitly so) in a different way to you than outright religious scenes. You can select an object of meditation from the Bible itself, or, choose from the mysteries of the Rosary (15 of them depict Biblical stories) or, from the (14) Stations of the Cross or a church’s stained glass windows. Once again, remember: simplicity, and the more prepared you are before your meditation period, the better.

While having emphasized the need for simplicity, there is another side to that coin---you do want detail, fleshiness, specificity. Our minds do not do so well, especially for beginners of meditation, with blankness, abstraction---thinking of something when there’s basically nothing to stimulate the thinking. For instance, to meditate on a “cloud” or, the “sky” or “God” or “grace” is difficult and sometimes nebulous. We usually need concrete, enfleshed details, depth and color---the more the better, that is, without getting overwhelmed because we want that “iMax approach”---a flooding of the senses so that all the senses are involved and engaged.

Reflect---This step primarily concerns the intellect---your brain, thinking, and, especially your power of focus. After reading or visualizing within (step one), now, in this second step, (keeping in mind that the "steps" are subtle and not always sharply defined), stimulate curiosity about it, the object, and intellectualize, mindfully, forming simple, meaningful thoughts about it. What is
the subject matter of the scene or thought read or reviewed? What do you see and sense and what, if any, action is taking place?

Here, you have two options, either one valid: you can “brainstorm” — think many different but related thoughts about the object, emphasizing variety and spontaneity, otherwise known as, "free association"; or, you may think deeply about one or two thoughts and focus on them. The point is to stimulate the intellect and then focus ---that is the key--- focusing on one thought, image or action.

Respond--- This is the main step, stimulating feeling, consolations and heartfelt sensations about the object of meditation. The main components of this step include gratefulness, emotion-feeling, and resolution. In this step, we want to use our hearts (versus our heads) to have inner dialogues-conversations with God, or with self. We want to develop affection for the Lord, or His ways (such as a saint or aspect of holiness). Therefore, we stimulate and utilize our emotions and passions in response to the thinking process.

In this step, we also want to cultivate resolutions of how we will respond to the meditation and actualize change in our lives, versus just keeping it in our heads without following through.

Now, let’s take, as a practical example of meditation, the "Transfiguration of Jesus" upon the mountain. Read slowly Matthew 17: 1-8.

“After six days, Jesus took Peter, James, and John, his brother and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, ‘Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.’ When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, Rise, and do not be afraid.’ And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone.”
Read the text above or review an image thereof. Choose a favorite one, as there are many of our Luminous Lord from the Transfiguration, basically all portraying light, radiance, life, lightness. After slowly reading the text or reviewing the image, you want to construe the scene within your mind and internalize the divine sight----make it real, within.

Visualize Christ on the mountain and/or other figures in the scene. Use all your senses----sight, sound, touch, and even smell.

Reflect upon and think about the various persons and happenings. You could, for instance, focus on what St. Peter says, “It is good to be here” (Matthew 17:4). While the first step involved the basics of a scene, composing it sensually, this step involves depth, thinking, penetration----ruminating about the scene or main focus.

Respond ----you may thank Jesus for His Divine Radiance. Let it seep in; praise Him and look forward to your own participation in His gracing you. Feel that goodness (don’t just think about it). Notice your heart grow and glow. Let your emotions flow from the reflection and allow it to transform you.

Reflect means, as your dad used to say---when you didn’t do it, “Use your head”—which obviously involves thinking. Think of Einstein here or being a “spiritual pinhead” of some sort. Yet, you don’t have to be a rocket scientist---just basically think a little about your main object of meditation.

Respond means heartfulness and is more important than reflection and thinking. If thinking is "Einsteinian", then responding is "child-likeness"; it means utilizing emotion, feeling and responsiveness.

The difference between these two actions, these steps of meditation, is insight and inspiration. Not everyone can think great thoughts and gain insights but everyone can harvest inspirations from a text. That’s your job and calling in these steps of meditation to strive to arrive to the point where it becomes natural, unforced and intuitive.