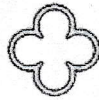


Lectio Divina



*Speak Lord; your servant is listening.
-1 Samuel 3:10*



Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scripture to be written for our learning; help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

What is Lectio Divina?

Lectio Divina is simply Latin for “sacred” or “divine reading” and is a means of engaging Scripture and being engaged by God’s Word for ongoing conversation and transformation. The principles of *lectio divina* were first expressed around 220CE by Origen. He affirmed that to really read the Bible, it is necessary to do so with attention, constancy, and prayer. Origen also emphasized the value of reading scripture with attention to possible different levels of meaning.

The Rule of Benedict made the practice of divine reading (*lectio divina*), together with labor and communal worship, the base of monastic life. And the systematization of spiritual reading into four steps dates back to the 12th century when Guigo II, a Carthusian monk, wrote a book titled The Monk’s Ladder setting out the four rungs: reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

Thus, the essential dynamic of *lectio divina* is a dialogue between the reader and the text. The Holy Spirit’s activity is not reduced to reader or text but located in the energy created between the reader and text. *Lectio divina* is a very straightforward and accessible spiritual discipline.

How do I practice Lectio Divina?

The four steps are as follows:

Lectio (reading): The first step is reading the passage slowly, attentively several times.

Meditatio (reflection): The second step is reflection, thinking about how to apply the passage to your life. Do you gravitate toward any phrase or word? This is not exegesis but a very personal reading of Scripture. Playfully explore what words, phrases, and ideas provoke and evoke you.

Oratio (prayer): The third step is responding to the passage through prayer. This is not an intellectual exercise but conversation with God.

Contemplatio (contemplation): This final step is resting in God’s presence as experienced through the prayerful and meditative engagement with God’s Word.

What does this really look like?

Take a few moments to sit in silence. Focus on your breathing or perhaps a favorite prayer word or phrase to help you clear your mind and be fully present. Allow yourself to enjoy a few moments of silence.

Choose a passage of scripture. Here is a list to help you if you don't already have one in mind. Read the passage you choose slowly.

God's covenant with me: Isaiah 54, Deuteronomy 7:7-11

God loves me and calls me: Romans 8:28-30

Responding to God's love: Deuteronomy 30:11-20

Do justice, love kindness: Micah 6:8

Rejoice: Philippians 4:4-7

Trust God: Psalm 62:8

Do not fear: Isaiah 43:1-2, 4

My burden is light: Matthew 11:28-30

Travel light: Luke 9:1-6

Be Still: Psalm 46:10-11

A favorite passage or one that suddenly comes to mind.

One of the texts for the daily lectionary

In the silence following the reading, focus on words, phrases, and images that strike you, that speak to you. Why is this? What might God be saying to you through this passage? Remember that this is not about preaching mental sermons to your self or discovering insights that will be helpful to others. What is God saying to YOU here and now? Use your imagination.

Read the passage a second time. In the silence following, engage in a period of prayer, silently, aloud, or written in response to your meditations and questions on the passage. Remember in any relationship, there is a great difference between hearing the words and really listening. Attentiveness and total honesty are essential to this form of spiritual discipline: "God, I feel bored, angry, excited, unable to focus..." Try the Collect of Purity if you need help being centered in God's presence.

Read the passage a third time. Rest in silence in light of your prayers and meditation. Savor a word or phrase that speaks to you. Carry it with you. Listen with all your being to God who speaks within you.

Remember throughout, simplicity is a good thing with less talking and more listening. With less noise and more silence... And remember, there is no right or wrong way to practice *lectio divina*. There is no goal of *lectio divina* other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.