

Understanding Lectio Divina

Latin for: Sacred/Spiritual Reading

A VERY ANCIENT art, practiced at one time by all Christians, is the technique known as lectio divina - a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures which enables the Bible, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God. This ancient practice has been kept alive in the Christian monastic tradition, and is one of the precious treasures of Benedictine monastics and oblates. Time set aside in a special way for lectio divina enables us to discover in all of our daily life an underlying spiritual rhythm. Within this rhythm we discover an increasing ability to offer more of ourselves and our relationships to the Father, and to accept the embrace that God is continuously extending to us in the person of his Son Jesus Christ.

Adapted from Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B.

The Spirit of Lectio

Lectio (Reading)

Reading the Bible passage gently and slowly several times. The passage itself is not as important as the savoring of each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow speaks to you.

Meditatio (Meditation)

Reflecting on the text of the passage and thinking about how it applies to one's own life. This is considered to be a very personal reading of the Scripture and very personal application.

Oratio: Prayer

Talking to God. Responding to the passage by opening the heart to God. This is not primarily an intellectual exercise, but is thought to be more of the beginning of a conversation with God.

Contemplatio (Contemplation)

Listening to God. This is a freeing of oneself from one's own thoughts, both mundane and holy, and hearing God talk to us; opening the mind, heart, and soul to the influence of God.

The Flow of Lectio

THIS FORM of lectio divina works best in a group of between four and eight people. A group leader coordinates the process and facilitates sharing. The same text from the Scriptures is read out four times, followed each time by a period of silence and an opportunity for each member of the group to share the fruit of her or his lectio.

THE FIRST reading is for the purpose of hearing a word or passage that touches the heart. When the word or phrase is found, it is silently taken in, and pondered during the silence which follows.

THE SECOND reading is for the purpose of contemplating the word or passage that touched the heart during the first reading. After the silence, each person gently speaks the word or phrase that has touched their heart.

THE THIRD reading is for the purpose of "hearing" or "seeing" Christ in the text. Each ponders the word that has touched the heart and asks where the word or phrase touches their life that day. In other words, how is Christ the Word touching their own experience, their own life? How are the various members of the group seeing or hearing Christ reach out to them through the text? Then, after the silence, each member of the group shares what they have "heard" or "seen."

THE FOURTH and final reading is for the purpose of experiencing Christ "calling us forth" into doing or being. Members ask themselves what Christ in the text is calling them to do or to become today or this week. After the silence, each shares one more time.