

The Tradition of Lectio Divina

Scripture as Prayer

A Brief Introduction to Lectio Divina¹

Overview

Lectio Divina is “A Vital Encounter with the Lord”

- It’s not just “Bible Study,” nor a mere religious discussion based on the scriptures
- Meant to be enlivening, existential, transformative, and uniting

Lectio Divina is not just for monks and religious, but for all believers and can be done by individuals or groups.

- **Individuals:** use and adapt Lectio Divina flexibly to one’s own needs and style
- **Groups:** provide a regular pattern to build openness and trust in a community

Lectio Divina Basic Process: (flexibly adapt the following process, as needed, for individuals and groups)

1. Reading (lectio) – hearing God’s Word in the Sacred Scriptures as I/we read a short text aloud
 - What does this biblical text itself really say?
2. Meditation (meditatio) – reflecting on the meaning and relevance of the text that I/we have read
 - What is God saying to me/us through this text?
3. Prayer (oratio) – speaking with God in praise, thanksgiving, contrition, petition, intercession
 - What do I/we say to God in response to this text?
4. Contemplation (contemplatio) – listening to God more quietly in the silence of our hearts
 - How does this text make me/us feel in my/our relationship with God?
5. Action (actio) – letting the encounter concretely affect our daily life and work in the world
 - How will I/we change what I/we do today in response to hearing this text?

“The Church in America should give high priority to prayerful reflection upon the Sacred Scripture by all the faithful. This Bible reading, accompanied by prayer, is known in the tradition of the Church by the name Lectio Divina, a practice that should be encouraged among all Christians.”
(John Paul II, Ecclesia in America, 1999, p. 31)

¹Material provided by Rev. Felix Just, S.J. <http://catholic-resources.org>.



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Praying The Word: Lectio Divina

by ENZO BIANCHI

1. CALL ON THE HOLY SPIRIT
 - pray, so that “the eyes of your heart may be opened”
 - pray, with confidence that you are being heard
 - God always gives “to those who ask humbly and openly”
2. OPEN THE BIBLE AND READ
 - God wants to speak, “person to person”: God’s Word
 - read over the text a few times
 - slowly, calmly (silence both inside and outside)
 - listen with your WHOLE heart, understanding and being
3. SEARCH BY MEDITATING
 - pray that you are receptive to God’s will and message
 - always seek Christ crucified and risen
 - “let the Word draw you forth by its attractiveness”
 - reflect, with your understanding
 - reread and apply the message to yourself
 - relate the text to other scripture passages (interpret)
 - use aids: concordances, exegetical, commentaries
 - avoid examination of conscience
 - be passive & follow Christ
 - let Christ transform you
4. PRAY TO THE LORD WHO HAS SPOKEN TO YOU
 - respond to God’s invitations, inspirations, calls, messages and directions
 - “pray with frank honest trust”
 - avoid being “tripped up by too many human words”
 - Praise, Thanksgiving and Intercession
 - avoid thinking of yourself and creativity, anything drawing outward
 - put all obedience in God, be ready at His service
5. CONTEMPLATE... CONTEMPLATE
 - in partnership with God, try to see everything through His eyes
 - be at peace
 - communion (divine macrothymia: empathy and consciousness of the whole.)

LATER APPLICATION...

6. KEEP THE WORD IN YOUR HEART
 - store up the Word as Mary did
 - at various times of the day go over the passage, just one verse or the themes in your memory
 - foster awareness of God-- unify your whole day
 - wake up the Word in your heart
 - bear the word as a companion
7. TO LISTEN MEANS TO FOLLOW INSTRUCTION
 - commit yourself to putting God’s word into action
 - make practical resolutions
 - act creatively
 - let our faith bear: love, joy, peace, patience, good will, kindness, faithfulness, humility, self-control (Galatians 5:22)

Traditional Practices:

- *Monks spend at least 30 minutes in Lectio Divina. Masters of this prayer recommend an hour.*
- *Bianchi reprimands those who “choose” the scripture that they would “like” to pray with. He warns that Lectio Divina is futile if we are only seeking “good feelings” and not seeking after God, Himself.*
- *Many monks pray with the Gospel for the day or pray through a certain book of the Bible.*
- *Monks recommend that for the Word to best permeate into your mind and heart, spend your Lectio Divina with very short passages, a single paragraph suffices, sometimes even a single verse.*