

***Lectio Divina* As A Spiritual Practice**

Lectio Divina is a traditional way of cultivating friendship with Christ. It is a way of listening to Scripture as if we were in conversation with Christ and He were suggesting the topics of conversation. *Lectio Divina* is a slow, contemplative praying of Scriptures that leads to union and oneness with God. It is a way of listening deeply for the voice of God in Scripture and then allowing what we hear to shape our way of being and doing in the world. Though there are Monastic, Scholastic, and modern forms of this ancient spiritual practice, traditionally *Lectio Divina* is broken down into four steps. A contemporary application adds a fifth. The following steps are named in Latin with an English interpretation:

1. ***Lectio* (reading)**
2. ***Meditatio* (meditation/reflection)**
3. ***Oratio* (response)**
4. ***Contemplatio* (contemplation/rest)**
5. ***Actio* (action)**

Each of these steps together form a process by which we encounter God in His Holy Word and respond to His love and grace. Let's look briefly at one way to approach each step.

***Lectio* (Reading):** As you read a selected passage, listen with your heart as well as your ears. Which words seem to rest on your heart? What phrase, sentence, or one word stands out to you? Repeat that phrase, sentence, or word over and over, savoring it and allowing it to settle deeply in your heart.

In the first phase of *Lectio Divina* you may want to try to understand what the passage you are reading says in itself. This is the literal or metaphorical meaning of the Scripture passage and the lessons everyone should recognize in reading it. At this stage you do not yet consider your own life in connection with the Scriptures. You do not let your opinions influence your reading, but seek to understand the message of the passage. You may wish to end this step with the question: *What does the text say that everyone should understand?*

***Meditatio* (Meditation/Reflection):** Here you relish the words you have read being attentive to what speaks to your heart. With receptiveness transfer the meaning of the passage to your life today.....the same scripture passage may mean different things on different days to different people.....be open.

In the meditation step of *Lectio Divina*, you may want to ask, *what does this text say to me, today, and to my life?* Allow God to pull up certain memories of people, places, and events in your life that relate to the passage you are reading. Meditation is also an opportunity to see yourself in the text. Consider your own feelings as if you were a participant in the text or try to understand what it would be like to be one of the people represented in the text. In this way you come to a deeper appreciation of how God is working in your life through His Word. Having entered into the story yourself, you can return to the present and consider the areas in your own life that God is calling you to contemplate.

Oratio (Response): Spontaneously voice a simple prayer using the phrase or word that spoke to you from the Scripture. It may be a prayer of praise, thanksgiving, or petition.

Through a meditation on Scripture, you experience an intimate encounter with God that leads you to respond in prayer. Having met the Lord in His Holy Word, you openly and honestly speak to him in your own words. In this way you consider prayer to be a simple conversation with God. It is a conversation that comes in various forms: you may ask petitions (or requests) of him, you may give him thanks, and give him praise. At this step you may ask yourself: *What can I say to God in response to His Word?*

Contemplatio (Contemplation/Rest): Read the passage a final time and rest in the Word, reflecting and allowing God to speak in several minutes of silence. Simply experience God's presence and open yourself to a deeper hearing of God's Word. After resting, take the phrase, sentence, or word that spoke to you into your daily activity and listen to it, reflect on it, pray over it, and rest in it as time allows during the day. Allow it to become a part of you.

Through contemplation you come to an understanding of the parts of your life that need to be transformed by God's grace. You humble yourself and open your life up to His transformative power. At this step in the *Lectio Divina* process, you may ask: *What conversion of the mind, heart, and life is God asking of me?*

Actio (Action): Now you reflect upon an action step that may come to you...no need to rush this, it may come to you later. In this final step you may ask yourself: *How is the Lord asking me to act on this Scripture? In what direction is the Holy Spirit guiding me?*

Although “action” is not considered to be a part of the original Monastic or Scholastic forms of *Lectio Divina* proper, it is often included in modern adaptations of this practice. Because a personal call to action is often a result of an encounter with God in Sacred Scripture, its inclusion is worthy of consideration. Having received God’s love and grace, we go forth to love the world with the love we have been given. A true encounter with God always calls us to a greater oneness with God, others, and creation.