

introduction to *lectio divina*

We live in a society that is inundated with words and images which rarely comfort or uplift us and rarely speak of God. Yet, there is evidence of a great spiritual hunger among all people in every culture. There is good reason for this.

By creating us God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit established a bond with each one of us, a relationship we are capable of experiencing and embracing in freedom.

Not only is God our true origin, He is also our end; every human person needs God, needs to experience His saving presence to be whole and happy.

In order to experience personally and to encounter intimately the living God, we need to hear His Word, the Word that saves, the Word of perfect wisdom and unquenchable personal love.

His Word is the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man. He became one of us so as to lift us up to Himself. By His becoming man and the sending of the Holy Spirit upon His Mother Mary and the Apostles (Acts 1-2), He ensured that every generation would have access to His Word through His Church.

Given the many challenges to receiving this Word of God, we need to “go apart awhile” (cf. Mk 6:31) and seek the One who loves us beyond all imagining. *Lectio divina* (Latin for “divine reading”) is a method of prayer particularly suited to meeting the spiritual need of modern busy Christians. It is a way for us to receive words and images that do speak of God and bring us His life, light and love.

“I came that they might have life,
and have it to the full.”

Jn 10:10

attitudes for *lectio divina*

In order to derive the greatest fruit from *lectio divina*, it is important to cultivate the right attitudes.

First, only in a **silence** that is both exterior and interior are we able to hear what God is saying to us. By withdrawing from the external noises of daily life (radio, TV, conversation, etc.) and by seeking to listen deeply to the voice of God in the depths of our hearts, we open ourselves to His grace and transforming love. Cultivating this type of silence becomes the daily challenge of a faithful disciple in the midst of a noisy world.

Secondly, we should recall that Mary, the Mother of God, is the perfect example of being



a disciple of Christ, her Son. At the Annunciation (Lk 26f), Mary reveals a posture of deeply humble **active receptivity**, a radical openness to all that God willed to say to her and to accomplish in her life. Mary trusted that all things were possible with God and surrendered totally to His Word so that it would be fulfilled in her. Therefore, we should strive to actively receive as Mary did, relying on her intercession to obtain this grace.

Lastly, because God is trustworthy, we should **trust** Him without hesitation at every moment as did Mary.

method of *lectio divina*

There are four basic movements of the prayer: *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*. They follow four fundamental steps: reading (*lectio*) to remember the words, pondering (*meditatio*) to understand, responding (*oratio*) to choose what God wills, and resting (*contemplatio*) to be in the relationship of love. These four should be preceded by an introductory prayer and ended with a brief prayer as well.

preparation for *lectio divina*

- ✘ Choose a quiet prayerful place in your home, office, outdoors, or local church.
- ✘ Select a passage of the Word of God, for example the Sunday or daily Gospel, or a continuous reading of one book of Scripture.
- ✘ Select an appropriate time and duration (20 to 40 minutes for those beginning).
- ✘ Assume a prayerful and serene posture, comfortable yet not too relaxed.

introductory prayer

- ✘ Humbly recognize the loving Presence of the indwelling Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- ✘ Praise and thank Him for His Word and this moment of prayer.
- ✘ Ask the Holy Spirit for the gift to receive the Word of God as He wills.

Lectio (Reading)

What does the Word of God say?

- ✘ Slowly read the passage a few times with great attentive reverence, aloud if possible.
- ✘ Notice the words that strike you in a particular way, positively or negatively.

meditatio (Meditation)

What does the Word of God say to me?

- ✘ Dialog with God about why those particular words and phrases struck you; how do they apply to you?
- ✘ Reflect on your own reactions to the Word; what is God showing you about yourself?

oratio (Praying)

What do I say to God in response to His Word?

- ✘ Respond sincerely in a conversation with God as with a friend; talk about what is really in your heart.
- ✘ Praise, thank, trust Him; ask for forgiveness; intercede, petition for graces.

contemplatio (Contemplation)

What conversion of heart is God asking of me?

- ✘ Be with the Word and rest in God.
- ✘ Thank Jesus for living this gift in me

concluding prayer

- ✘ Praise and thank God for the graces received.
- ✘ Close with *Our Father and Glory Be*.

after lectio divina

respicere (to Look Back, to Review)

What did I experience in my prayer?

- ✘ Seek to notice the circumstances and qualities of your prayer experience.
- ✘ Write down how the Trinity and you were present to each other.

repetitio (Repetition)

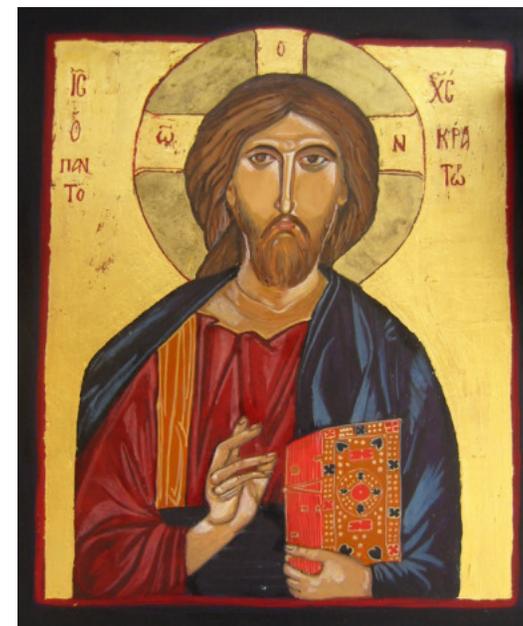
Where was I moved most in my prayer?

- ✘ The next time you pray, return to the Word of God that moved you and where you found fruit.

actio (Action)

What am I resolved to do now that I have received the Word of God?

- ✘ Make concrete resolutions about how you will make your life a gift for others in charity because of what God has given to you.



✧ **amen** ✧

Please pray for vocations!

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With ecclesiastical approval.

Lectio Divina

**encountering Jesus Christ
in his living word**

*“In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.”*

John 1:1