

all, even the deepest parts of us, where resides our hidden desires and fears.

Jesus Christ, the Word of God, actively pierces to those deep places, gradually conforming our hearts to his own, making us capable of divine love. But he does not force himself upon us, he respects our freedom. Therefore, we must give him permission.

Regular *Lectio Divina* is a way of regularly giving him that permission, as the people of God, Old and New Covenants, have done for thousands of years, delighting in the law of the Lord, meditating on it “day and night” (cf. Ps 1:2). It does not happen overnight, but over time, in the quiet of our hearts.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

As we meditate on the law of the Lord, our minds will gradually be conformed to Christ’s, and we will know the will of God, becoming empowered to do it even in the midst of a world which is opposed to Him. In other words, prayer helps us live a moral life. But it also works the other way around. The Christian moral life, a life lived in obedience to God, perfects the offering of ourselves which we give to God in prayer, strengthening our communion with Him.

This leads us to another reason to use *Lectio Divina*: it helps us receive more fruit from the greatest form of prayer, the worship of God in Holy Mass. As we give the Lord permission to form us through our personal and family prayer, we make ourselves more ready for participation with a pure heart in the prayer of the whole Church.

In this vein, *Lectio Divina* is much like the practice of Eucharistic Adoration: “Just as the adoration of the Eucharist prepares for, accompanies and follows the liturgy of the Eucharist, so too prayerful reading, personal and communal, prepares for, accompanies and deepens what the Church celebrates when she proclaims the word in a liturgical setting” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Verbum Domini*, Pope Benedict XVI).

“Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. ... They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures’” (Luke 24:27,32)?

Conclusion

For the Christian, the whole Bible, Old and New Testaments, speak of Jesus Christ, God’s complete Word to mankind. Prayerfully reading the Scriptures is thus contemplating the face of Christ. This is the final reason to practice *Lectio Divina*. As Mary listened at the feet of Christ in her home in Bethany, thereby choosing “the better part” (cf. Luke 10:38-42), so we should sit at his feet and listen to him, if we truly wish to be his disciples.

Try to practice *Lectio Divina* weekly, or even daily.

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me” (John 15:4).

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Bible Version

Revised Standard Version – with Apocrypha

Prayer of Consecration to Jesus

God our Father, I believe that you created me out of love. In a thousand ways I have sinned against you. I repent of all of my sins. Please forgive me.

Thank you for sending your Son to die for me, to save me from hell. I choose this day to renew my covenant with you and to place Jesus at the center of my heart. I surrender to Him as Lord over my whole life.

I ask you now to flood my heart and soul with your Holy Spirit and to grant me the gift of new life. Give me the grace and courage to live as a missionary disciple for the rest of my days. Amen.

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Lectio Divina

How to Meditate on the Scriptures



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Introduction

One privileged means to grow in your walk with God is to prayerfully read the Holy Bible. An excellent way to do this is to practice an ancient form of prayer with the Scriptures known as *Lectio Divina*, which means “divine reading.”

Lectio Divina has a long history of use in the Church, beginning very early, and during which it was formalized into a four step method: *Lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (meditation), *oratio* (prayer), and *contemplatio* (contemplation).

The following is a practical explanation of the method, with a step of preparation added at the beginning, so that you can learn how to draw spiritual nourishment from the Word of God. Please, “try this at home!”

Preparation

“Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God” (Isaiah 41:10).

You should set aside anywhere from ten to thirty minutes, or more, for *Lectio Divina*. Pick a suitable, quiet location to begin your meditation. Then make sure you are in a posture suitable for praying – comfortable, but not so comfortable that you might fall asleep; usually sitting or kneeling. After this, try to place yourself in the presence of God.

God is actually present at all times, in all places. Therefore, you need simply to recall that God is with you, or try to imagine Jesus present in the room with you, or in your heart. After you have recalled that you are in God’s presence, ask the Holy Spirit to inspire your meditation, teach you to pray, and help you to avoid distractions.

1. Lectio - Reading

“The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart” (Romans 10:8).

Now it is time to open up the Scriptures. A great place to go is to one of the Gospels, for in them we have the words and deeds of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, when He walked upon the earth. You may also turn to one of the New Testament epistles (letters), or to any other place in the Bible. Choose a passage or a set of passages.

You may decide to have this planned out ahead of time, if you wish. After you have the text before you, you may trace the sign of the cross on the page with your thumb, and begin to slowly read it. Concentrate

on the words that you are reading and their meaning. Keep reading slowly until a particular word, phrase, or sentence stands out to you. Pause at this point and reflect upon it.

Ask the Lord why this word/phrase/sentence stands out to you. At this point, you are moving on to the next step, *meditatio*. If nothing stands out the first time through, don’t worry, just begin reading the section you chose again, slowly and with attention.

2. Meditatio - Meditation

“Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Luke 2:19, cf. 2:51).

Now you are reflecting on the word, phrase, or sentence that stands out to you. During this time you may repeat it again and again, slowly, seeking the meaning of the text, or you may reflect on the meaning that is immediately clear to you. The meaning of the text may be its literal meaning or a spiritual or unique meaning, and it may be a general truth or a truth spoken directly to you. This is a time of listening to God’s Word alive and active in your heart.

Don’t force it! Let God’s Word penetrate your heart and lead you in unexpected ways, yet always remaining faithful to the doctrine of the faith, in union with the Church, for God will never lead us contrary to what He has revealed in Jesus Christ (cf. Hebrews 1:1-3), and He speaks to His children with one voice.

Perhaps the Lord will impress upon your mind a truth of the faith leading you to praise Him, to do some good deed, or to repent and change your behavior in some area of your life. Or perhaps He just desires you to rest in His loving embrace, made present to you in His Word. When you have moved into these areas, you have moved on to the next two steps, *oratio* and *contemplatio*.

3. Oratio - Prayer

“Your prayer is the word you speak to God. When you read the Bible, God speaks to you; when you pray, you speak to God.” – St. Augustine

Now you are speaking to God in response to what you are reading and meditating upon; you are conversing with Him about His Word. You may be praising Him, thanking Him, asking forgiveness, or for greater insight into the Word, grace to do His will, etc.

If during this time you lose your heart’s focus on God,

you may go back to reading or meditating. The point is not to move lock-step from one step to the next, nor is it a matter of simple input/output, but we seek to let the Holy Spirit, through the words of the Bible, stir our hearts to fix upon God and what He is saying to us.

Perhaps He desires to remain mostly silent for the time being: No matter – the point is that we seek Him. He will reveal Himself to us in the way and at the times that He chooses, for our own benefit.

4. Contemplatio - Contemplation

“If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23).

If God chooses, He will lead you from reading, meditation, and prayer, to the enjoyment of His presence. In Contemplation you become in some way absorbed in God and in His words, “looking” at God and being “looked at” by Him.

This takes place for as long or as short a time as God wishes. All we can do is receive it, and prepare our hearts to receive it again. Do not think that it is purely a matter of feelings, for contemplation can be received even when experiencing great spiritual darkness or dryness.

Why Pray Lectio Divina? An Exhortation to Prayer

“Seek in reading and you will find in meditation; knock in prayer and it will be opened to you in contemplation.” – St. John of the Cross

Why should we use *Lectio Divina*? The simple answer: because we need God. God, our Creator and Father, gave us existence that we might enjoy full union with Him, sharing in His divine life. This life is an eternal communion of love between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and we are invited to enter into it, as sons and daughters in the Son, as temples of the Holy Spirit. In this life of communion with the Trinity, and in this life alone, is the full happiness which we all desire. *Lectio Divina* is a means of seeking entrance to that communion, a way to knock at the door of heaven.

How can *Lectio Divina* accomplish this? As the Scriptures say, “the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to [his] eyes” (Heb 4:12-13). God sees