

LECTIO DIVINA

'Lectio Divina' (pronounced lex-ee-o; dih-vee-nah) means "divine reading". It is classic approach to drawing near to God through meditating, praying, slowly and deliberately reading Scripture. This ancient practice has been kept alive in the Christian monastic tradition and has been described as one of the "precious treasures of the Benedictine monastics".

We believe Scripture teaches that each follower of Christ has within him/her the very spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches that every follower of Christ lives as a "new creation"—part of that new life is living a life—guided uniquely by the Holy Spirit and by the Scriptures. Lectio Divina becomes a practice that is simply a tool to help us stop our busy lives and sit in meditation of Scripture.

Lectio Divina is not meant to be a superstitious "trick" to be more spiritual. It is however, a valuable practice that can aid us in living a prayerful and aware life in God. It teaches us to be more aware of God, who He is, who He is making us to be, and how He will work in and through us. It makes us aware of God's work within us through revealing our sin and building us up. It also makes us more aware of God's plans for us to live out lives that tell the story of Jesus.

Ultimately, Lectio Divina, as we practice it together and as it becomes formative in those within our community, we more naturally speak about spiritual things. As we regularly engage in a practice that places us before God in meditation, in prayer, and in Scripture, then we become more deeply spiritual people. We hope that answering questions like, "What do you perceive God doing in you/in community? What does God seem to be beginning or continuing in your life/in the life of our community?" become second nature within our conversations. It is important to be asking and answering these questions—and other questions like these—not in a scripted way, but as we become more aware people.

BEGIN WITH A PRAYER OF HUMBLE EXPECTATION.

We may often come to the Scriptures as it is just any other book (textbook, novel, history, proverb, news, etc), but we must develop a humility when opening Scripture. When humility is present, we are acknowledging that "our thoughts are not God's thoughts" and "our ways are not God's ways". So, when we are humble, we are ready to hear from God---hearing Him in such a way that will allow God to do all that He desires within us.

The prayer of humility may simply be "show us Jesus", or asking for God's presence and direction, or it could be praying a Psalm (Ps. 119 is very fitting) "I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you . . . I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word."

LECTIO: SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY READ THE SCRIPTURE PASSAGE ALOUD.

Again, our approach to Scripture must be altogether different from the other reading we may do with the newspaper, an internet article, or an email. There is something about reading slowly and aloud that sets our focus more deeply on the text at hand.

MEDITATION: BE AWARE OF THE WORD OR PHRASE THAT STANDS OUT.

The "shimmering word" or phrase is described by the Benedictines as something that "beckons you, address you . . . something that stirs, unnerves, disturbs, grabs, or touches you." Mary, the mother of Jesus, is described in Luke 2 as "pondering in her heart" all that happened in Jesus' birth and life. This is very similar to the action we take in Lectio Divina---it is meditating or



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becoming aware of the Word of God. Included in our meditation of the word or phrase that “shimmers” is our questions of “what ideas, feelings, images, come to mind when meditating on this word, phrase, or reading?”

PRAYER: COMMUNION WITH GOD

Lectio Divina is prayer from beginning to end. But this is more focused prayer as a dialogue with God. In this prayer we allow the Word that we have taken in, and on which we are meditating, to touch and change ourselves deeply.

The moments we spend in prayer with God it is He that touches us most deeply, not the words spoken. We may be tempted for Lectio to produce something. We must remember that we should not bring to Lectio our agenda but find God’s work within us. Often the work that He may be doing in our time quietly before the Word will find the most meaning not in information but relationally, us and Christ.

CONTEMPLATION: TAKING IT WITH YOU

Until this point, we may be tempted to simply practice reading and praying with no implication upon our living. It is in the final moments of this spiritual practice that we allow the time to set deeply within us, asking God to remind us and essentially carry Him with us throughout our day. When we end our time in Lectio Divina, we must not exit our life of prayer and awareness of God, but we should allow it to move us to a life of “pray(er) without ceasing”, essentially, living out a life of awareness and tenderness to God.