



Church of the Redeemer

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina, which means “Divine Reading,” has been practiced by Christians as early as the 3rd century. In some early traditions, monks practiced Lectio Divina as part of their sacred rule of life. For modern Christians, the practice helps us focus more on listening rather than on speaking. It generally has four sections: *lectio* (reading of Scripture), *meditatio* (meditation on the passage), *oratio* (prayer back to God about the passage) *contemplatio* (rest in the Lord and contemplation on the passage). If you want to practice Lectio Divina on your own, follow the guide below, or feel free to consult the webpage at the bottom. You will find in other sources different ways of approaching Lectio Divina. “Divine Reading” is more about the power of God’s word through Scripture to transform our hearts: “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12)

Individual Lectio Divina

Choose your passage. Many people follow the daily lectionary, or you could choose to read a book of the Bible in order every day. The Psalms are always a great resource. Lectio Divina is best done in small chunks, such as 10-15 verses.

1. Find a quiet place to comfortably sit and be quiet. You may want to close your eyes. Some people focus on their breathing or say a prayer with each breath, such as “Come, Lord Jesus,” or “Come, Holy Spirit,” or “Speak Lord, your servant is listening.” Don’t rush it. Don’t worry about your mind wandering everywhere. Sometimes (often!) it takes a while to settle your heart and mind.
2. Once you are still, read the passage aloud slowly. As you read the passage and think about it (*meditatio*), is there a word or phrase that keeps coming to mind? Hold that word or phrase in your mind and meditate on it. Turn it over; repeat it in your mind. Does the Lord bring a memory, a picture, a feeling. to you as you meditate? Invite Him to speak to you.
3. Read the passage slowly again, and sit in quiet and think about the passage. Pray back to the Lord what you feel like He is leading you to hear about Him. This may be praise, gratitude, repentance, a question. It’s okay to feel lost and confused too. You are practicing listening to Him and prayer that is focused on God more than on your own needs.

4. Read the passage slowly again and rest in God's presence. Imagine that you are sitting with a close friend. This time may just be filled with sitting in His presence, or you may want to speak to him what you've learned through this time. Rest knowing that you are God's beloved child, in the fellowship of the Blessed Trinity.

When reading a narrative, especially the Gospels, some people practice Lectio Divina by imagining that they are in the scene too. This practice can give a fresh perspective on these passages that many of us have heard since we were children. Finding ourselves "in" the story, so close to Jesus, can open our hearts to Him in a new, meaningful way.

Group Lectio Divina

Group Lectio Divina looks a little bit different, and is best if the group is relatively small (8 people at most.) Again choose a passage that you will read together. The group leader may want to read the passage each time, or three different people can read the passage. The leader may want to add a time of prayer before or after the readings, or have a few minutes to chat or get-to-know you questions at the beginning.

1. Once the Lectio Divina time begins, the group sits quietly for several minutes to settle their hearts and minds. Each individual may want to pray a prayer as mentioned above, something like "Come, Lord Jesus." After a few minutes, the passage is read aloud slowly to the group. After a few minutes of quiet meditation, the leader asks the following question: What stands out to you from this passage? (i.e. what's the shiny object that catches your attention?) Share your responses for a few minutes.

2. Again, allow for quiet before reading the passage aloud, slowly a second time. Sit quietly praying and reflecting on the passage for a few minutes. The leader then asks: What do you sense God may be speaking to you from this passage?

3. A member reads the passage aloud to the group a third time after a few minutes of silence. The group sits in silence again praying about and reflecting on the passage. This time the leader asks: What concrete steps of faith and obedience does God want you to take from this passage?

4. In conclusion to group time, the group may want to share prayer request. The leader may want to pray part of the Scripture read over the group, pray generally or specifically for each prayer request, or choose a prayer from the Book of Common Prayer.

Sometimes the Lord highlights the same verse or phrase for the entire group, and everyone seems to be hearing the same main theme. Other times, the Lord speaks to each person in a unique way. Group Lectio Divina can attune our hearts to each other's needs and help guide us to speak God's truth to each other through his Word.

Suggested Prayers before Lectio Divina

“Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”

-Book of Common Prayer, Second Sunday of Advent

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might.”

Ephesians 1:17-19

Along with Rev. Elijah Lovejoy’s Lectio Divina training manual, I also used this resource that you might find helpful: <https://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/catholic/2000/08/how-to-practice-lectio-divina.aspx>

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