

Pacific InterChristian Community Lectio Divina

An Ancient Way of Praying with Scripture *Lectio Divina* refers in Latin to the practice of "divine reading" of holy listening. This way of reading originated in the Benedictine tradition and involves a deeply personal and prayerful encounter with the presence of God through sacred texts. Lectio invites us to listen to the word of God with our whole being, and with our longing to be touched, healed and transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Select a time and place that is peaceful and in which you can be alert and attentive. Prepare for prayer in whatever way is natural for you. This may be a period of Centering Prayer, or a spoken prayer to open you more fully to the Spirit, a gentle relaxation process that focuses on breathing, singing or chanting, or simply a few minutes of silence to empty yourself of thoughts, images, and emotions.

Reading (lectio) - Slowly begin reading a biblical passage as if it were a long awaited love letter addressed to you. Approach it reverentially and expectantly, in a way that savours each word and phrase. Read the passage until you hear a word or phrase that touches you, resonates, attracts or even disturbs you.

Reflecting (meditatio) - Ponder this word or phrase for a few minutes. Let it sink in slowly and deeply until you are resting in it. Listen for what the word or phrase is saying to you at this moment in your life, what it may be offering to you, what it may be demanding of you.

Expressing (oratio) - When you feel ready, openly and honestly express to God the prayers that arise spontaneously within you from your experience of this word or phrase. These may be prayers of thanksgiving, petition, intercession, lament, or praise.

Resting (contemplatio) - Allow yourself to simply rest silently with God for a time in the stillness of your heart remaining open to the quiet fullness of God's love and peace. This is like the silence of communion between the mother holding her sleeping infant child or between lovers whose communication with each other passes beyond words.

These four movements of lectio divina may not always follow a linear progression. Allow yourself freedom and pray as you can. The aim is to move into the depths of silence and stillness where we can hear the Word spoken to us in love and respond to this Word with our love and our life. This is a gentle invitation into a movement from silence into the Word and back into silence, dwelling there in the presence of God.

Lectio Divina with a Group

Prepare as above...

The passage is read aloud twice in a prayerful and unhurried way. Pause for a couple of minutes between readings and read the passage more slowly the second time. (lectio)

Invite persons in the group to simply take in the passage during the first reading and allow it to "register." (ruminatio)

For the second reading, invite persons to listen for a word or a phrase that "shimmers" or reverberates in them. What is the word that attracts, touches, or even disturbs? (meditatio)

After the second reading, ask each person to share the word or phrase that has touched them. Allow this to be a slow movement with ample time between the speaking. (oratio)

The passage is read aloud a third time (perhaps by a second person)
Invite the persons in the group to attend to the way this word/phrase connects to the context of their life at this moment. Consider how it relates to what they have seen and heard this day? How does it speak to what is happening at home, at work, in their leisure time, in their community, in the world? (meditatio)

Take an extended time, if desired, to explore this connection in thought, in journaling, in art, or in movement. How is God present to you there? What is God like for you in your life? Is God calling you individually or collectively to any particular response in your present situation? (meditatio)

Briefly share with the whole group what you have heard or discovered. (oratio)
Close with an extended time of silence, simply resting quietly in the presence of God. A spoken prayer or blessing may complete the silence. (contemplatio)