



## **Opening prayer (Can be varied):**

**Oh God, Father of the Word Incarnate, you show your almighty power present in your mercy and forgiveness. Continue to fill us with your gifts of love. Help us to hurry towards the eternal life, your promise, and come to share in the joys of your kingdom. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.... Amen.**

**A deep Prayer Life is to grow in depth and intimacy with God, to “talk” with God. The hunger we feel for God is an invitation to have a closer, more personal relationship with Him.**

**St. Augustine said that “Our hearts are restless until they rest in God.” Lectio Divina is an ancient tool to accomplish this task of resting in God in our daily lives, both as individuals and/ or groups.**

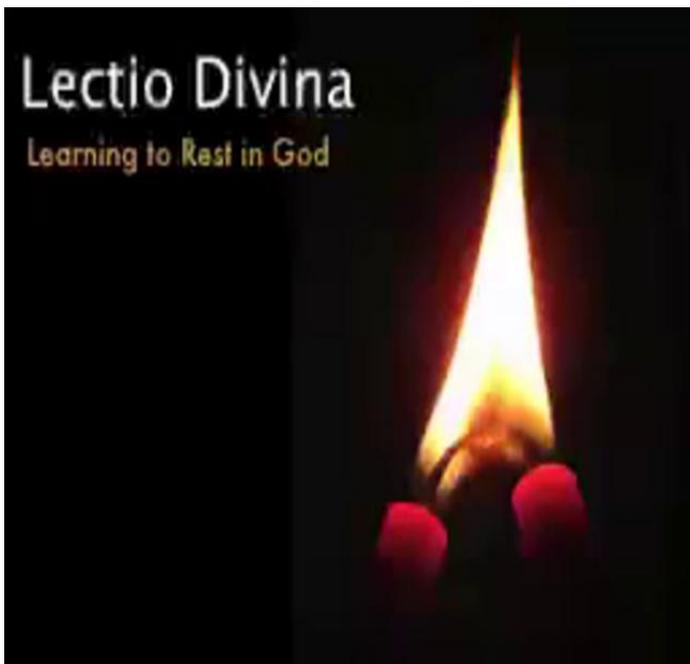
***“Lectio Divina”*, a Latin term, means *“divine reading”* and describes a way of reading the Scriptures whereby we gradually let go of our own agenda and open ourselves to what God wants to say to us. It represents a method of prayer and scriptural reading intended to promote communion with God and provide special spiritual insights. The principles of lectio divina were expressed around the year 2nd to 3rd century and later practiced by Catholic monks, especially the monastic rules of Sts. Pachomius, Augustine, Basil, and Benedict.**

**The origins are rooted in monastic life, practices, and on monastic orders. In the 12th century, a Carthusian monk called Guigo, described the stages which he saw as essential to the practice of Lectio Divina. There are various ways of practicing Lectio Divina either individually or in groups but Guigo's description remains fundamental.**

**The practice of Lectio Divina as a way of praying the Scriptures has been a fruitful source of growing in relationship with Christ for many centuries and in our own day is being rediscovered by many individuals and groups. The Word of God is alive and active and will transform each of us if we open ourselves to receive what God wants to give us.**

The following stages of Lectio Divina are not fixed rules of procedure but simply guidelines as to how the prayer normally develops. Its natural movement is towards greater simplicity and depth-ness, with less and less talking (or thinking) and more listening in the heart. Gradually the words of Scripture begin to dissolve and the Word is revealed before the eyes of our heart.

How much time should be given to each stage depends very much on whether it is used individually or in a group. If Lectio Divina is used for group prayer, obviously more structure is needed than for individual use. In group prayer, much will depend on the type of group.



Lectio Divina may involve discussing the implications of the Word of God for daily life but it cannot be reduced to this. The movement of the prayer is towards silence. If the group is comfortable with silence, more time could be spent resting in the Word.

The practice of lectio divina is currently very popular among today's Catholics. Pope Benedict XVI said in a 2005 speech, "I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of lectio divina: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart." Lectio is also said to be adaptable for people of other Christian confessions.

## **This are the steps to be followed when doing INDIVIDUAL Lexio Divina:**

The first stage is **Lectio (READING)** where we read the Word of God, slowly and reflectively so that it sinks into us. Any passage of Scripture can be used for this way of prayer but the passage should not be too long. Reading the Bible passage gently and slowly several times. The passage itself is not as important as the savoring of each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow speaks to the practitioner.

The second stage is **Meditatio (MEDITATION - reflection)** where we think about the text we have chosen and ruminate upon it so that we take from it what God wants to give us. (RUMINATE "chew the word") Reflecting on the text of the passage and thinking about how it applies to one's own life. This is considered to be a very personal reading of the Scripture and very personal application.

The third stage is **Oratio (PRAYER)** where we leave our thinking aside and simply let our hearts speak to God. This prayer-response is inspired by our reflection on the Word of God. Responding to the passage by opening the heart to God. This is not primarily an intellectual exercise, but is thought to be more of the beginning of a conversation with God.

The final stage of Lectio Divina is **Contemplatio (CONTEMPLATION)** where we let go not only of our own ideas, plans and meditations but also of our holy words and thoughts. We simply rest in the Word of God. We listen at the deepest level of our being to God who speaks within us with a still small voice. As we listen, we are gradually transformed from within. Obviously this transformation will have a profound effect on the way we actually live and the way we live is the test of the authenticity of our prayer. We must take what we read in the Word of God into our daily lives. Listening to God. This is a freeing of oneself from one's own thoughts, both mundane and holy, and hearing God talk to us. Opening the mind, heart, and soul to the influence of God.

The connection between Bible reading and prayer is one to be encouraged; they should always go together. However, the dangers inherent in this kind of practice, and its astonishing similarity to transcendental meditation and other non-Christian, “New Age” rituals, should be carefully considered. It has the potential to become a pursuit of mystical experience where the goal is to free the mind and empower oneself, rather than a deeper connection with God, Christ thru the Holy Spirit.

The Christian should use the Scriptures to pursue the knowledge of God, wisdom, and holiness through the objective meaning of the text with the aim of transforming the mind according to truth.

Referring to the constitution Dei Verbum the document emphasizes that all Christian prayer and meditation should **“proceed to converge on Christ” and be guided by the gift of the Holy Spirit.** It reaffirmed that the Church recommends the reading of the Scripture prior to and as a source of Christian prayer and meditation – Lexio Divina is such a source.

Lectio Divina is reverential listening; listening both in a spirit of silence and of awe. We are listening for the still, small voice of God that will speak to us personally in our hearts - not loudly, but intimately.

◆ lectio

(reading slowly)

◆ meditatio

(ruminate)

◆ oratio

(pray and listen)

◆ contemplatio

(listening and rest)

## **Lectio Divina Shared in GROUP**

First select an appropriate Scripture reading. **No more than 10 paragraphs.**

### **A. Listening for the Gentle Touch of Christ the Word (The Literal Sense)**

1. First a person reads aloud (twice) the passage of scripture, as others are attentive to some segment that is especially meaningful to them.

2. Silence for 1-2 minutes. Each hears and silently repeats a word or phrase that attracts.

3. Sharing aloud: [A word or phrase that has attracted each person].

**A. simple statement of one or a few words. No elaboration.**

### **B. How Christ, the Word Speaks to ME (The Allegorical Sense).**

4. Second reading of the same passage by another person.

5. Silence for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on "Where does the content of this reading touch my life today?"

6. Sharing aloud: Briefly: "I hear, I see ... / I....."

### **C. What Christ the Word Invites Me to DO (The Moral Sense)**

7. Third reading by still another person.

8. Silence for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on "I believe that God wants me to ..... today/this week."

9. Sharing aloud: at somewhat greater length the results of each one's reflections.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWttGbIH10>