

Lectio Divina (Divine Reading)

Choose a text. Choose a text of the Scriptures that you wish to pray from your daily reading. Choose it because it sticks out as relevant to where you're at in your journey with Christ. The text could be a promise to hold onto, a warning to heed, a command to obey, a sin to repent of, etc. The goal of this time is to warm your heart before the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Meditation on the gospel (good news) is the best means for this.

Know the Context. Remember that while the Bible is written for us, it wasn't originally written to us. Scripture is written in various genres (prose, poetry, parable, gospel, letter, wisdom, historical, etc). We should always seek to answer this question: How did the original author intend to be understood by his original audience in real time, and in a real place?

Be Still. Place yourself in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent. Some focus for a few moments on their breathing; others have a word or phrase they recite such as, "Lead me Good Shepherd," or the Jesus prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner."

Listen. Turn to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow says, "I am for you today." Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. In lectio divina, God is teaching us to listen to him, to seek him in silence. He does not reach out and grab us; rather, he gently invites us ever more deeply into his presence.

Speak to Yourself. Take a word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories, and ideas. Doon't be afraid of distractions! Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself that, when they rise up during lectio divina, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this to invite you into dialogue with God.

Speak to God. Whether you use words, ideas, or images--or all three--is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. Give to God what you have found within your heart.

Rest. Picture Christ embracing the weary sinner, the leper—the faltering disciple. And when he invites you to return to your contemplation of his word or to your inner dialogue with him, do so. Learn to use words when words are helpful, and to let go of words when they no longer are necessary. Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you in both words and silence, in spiritual activity and inner receptivity.

One More Thing. Sometimes you may return several times to the printed text, either to savor the context of the word or phrase that God has given or to seek a new word or phrase to ponder. At other times, only a single word or phrase will fill the whole time set aside for lectio divina. It is not necessary to assess anxiously the quality of your lectio divina, as if you were "performing" or seeking some goal. Lectio divina has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.