

# LECTIO DIVINA (Sacred Reading)

From the Benedictine tradition, *lectio divina* is a four-step method of reading and praying on texts from Sacred Scripture or writings from the spiritual classics.

## 1. *Lectio*—Read.

Choose a text. It may be a Scripture reading from the propers appointed for Mass or the Daily Office or from some other source. Or it may be a selection from one of the spiritual classics of the Christian tradition. Keep it to a manageable length. Once a suitable text is chosen, then go to a quiet place where you can be alone. Ask the Holy Spirit for help and then read the text: slowly, carefully, pausing as necessary to let words, images, and ideas sink in. Don't rush. Depending on the passage, you may want to go back and read it several times over before proceeding.

## 2. *Meditatio*—Reflect or Ponder.

Having read the text, take some time to reflect on its meaning. How does it speak to you? How does it apply to your life, if at all? There are many different techniques of meditation on a text, ranging from very simple to very elaborate and ornate. (More on this in subsequent sessions.) Use whatever works best for you. If you get distracted, don't get frustrated, just gently return to the text and subject at hand.

## 3. *Oratio*—Pray.

The third step is to let your meditation on the text lead you into direct conversation with God. Sometimes this just happens as a natural progression; sometimes you need to make a conscious decision to move to this step. What is God saying to you through your reading and meditation? What do you want to say to God in response? The goal here is mutual conversation, both speaking (whether silently or aloud) and listening.

## 4. *Contemplatio*—Contemplate.

The fourth step moves beyond conscious prayer into simple awareness of and attentiveness to God's presence without words or images. If this state eludes you, fret not. It doesn't come to everyone every time. For some, this is easily attained. For others, it takes years of practice before the first glimpses appear. Just be open and ready to receive this gift if and when it should come.

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