

# Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina, or divine reading, is a very ancient form of meditation on Scripture. By the time of St Benedict in the 6<sup>th</sup> century it was a regular practice in monasteries.

Regular Bible reading and study gives us breadth of knowledge. Lectio helps us also absorb Scripture in depth. Though simple, it needs practice, as the slow ritual reading is very different from our modern habit of skimming text.

Here are some guidelines. There are four elements:

1. **lectio** – we read the text
2. **meditatio** – we meditate on the text
3. **oratio** – we pray the text
4. **contemplatio** – we live the text

Choose the passage in advance of your prayer time, so you don't waste precious minutes.

Spend a few minutes settling down and let your breathing become gentler. Pray that your heart may be opened and receptive to the gift God knows you need today.

Read the passage very slowly, aloud if you find that helpful. Keep an open mind, and don't study the text. This is the **lectio**, or reading.

When a particular verse, phrase or word strikes you, put the Bible down. Here the reading stops and the **meditatio** begins, the absorption through repetition.

Repeat the phrase or word in your heart, gently rather than mechanically. You do not need to summon a mental picture or an emotion, or force a particular meaning. The repetition is to allow you to savour the phrase at an intuitive level. You may find that a longer phrase shortens to a single word.

In time you will become aware that the words have evoked a particular feeling or attitude. Now is the time to move to **oratio**, praying your response.

Express to God very simply the impression the words have made on you. You may want to pray spontaneously, and thank God for the gift they bring, ask God questions, or express longings they have stirred. Or you may want to remain in loving silence in God's presence.

Your prayer may move from oratio into **contemplatio**, a simple state of attention and attraction towards God as a compass needle points north.

After some time you will not be able to sustain your spontaneous praying or loving awareness. Distractions set in. You can either return to your repetition to focus your attention. Or if you have time, resume your reading, expecting to be touched again by another phrase.

At the end of your time, bring the lectio divina to a close with thanksgiving or by reciting the Lord's Prayer.

*Adapted from Martin L Smith "The Word is Very Near You"*

## Luke 2:27-35

*Jesus is presented in the Temple (excerpt, NRSV)*

Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God, saying,

“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;  
for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.”

And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

## Romans 12.1-5

*The new life in Christ (NRSV)*

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.