

Lectio Divina – A Spiritual Practice

Lectio Divina is a classical monastic practice of prayerfully reading the Bible. It is part of the triune rule of monastic life which included – divine reading, manual labour, and participation in liturgical life. Lectio Divina is latin for divine reading, spiritual reading, or “holy reading.” It is a practice that is intended to nurture a relationship with God and to increase knowledge of God's word. There are Four Moments in Lectio Divina:

Lectio

This first moment consists in reading the scriptural passage slowly, attentively several times. It is a time to gently listen to hear a word or phrase that is God's word for us this day.

Meditatio

The second moment focuses on a word or phrase that speaks to us in a personal way. This moment invites us to ‘ruminate’ on the word or phrase – and while gently repeating it to ourselves, allow it to interact with our thoughts, our hopes, our memories, our desires. In this moment we open ourselves to God's word for us.

Oratio

This moment is the response to the passage by opening ourselves to God in prayer. It is not an intellectual exercise, but an intuitive conversation or dialogue with God. In this moment we allow the word or phrase that we have taken in and on which we are pondering to touch and change our deepest selves.

Contemplatio

This moment is characterized by taking time in silence to simply be, rest and enjoy the experience of being in God's presence.

Engaging Lectio Divina as an individual:

Choose a text of scripture you wish to pray

Find a comfortable position and take a few moments to breathe deeply or engage in some other practice that helps you to centre

Read the text slowly, gently, listening for a word or phrase that speaks to you

Focus on the word or phrase – memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself allowing it to interact with your inner world of joys, challenges, concerns, memories and ideas

Then to speak to God – interact with God trusting in God who loves and knows you. Share with God what you have discovered and experienced in this time.

Finally, be still and rest in God's loving care.

Engaging Lectio Divina as a group:

Though originally intended as an individual practice, today many people use this in group settings. A group leader coordinates the process and facilitates the sharing. The scripture is read three times, followed each time by a period of silence and an opportunity for each member of the group to share their thoughts.

First Reading : (usually read twice) read the text with the purpose of hearing a word or phrase that touches the heart.

This reading is followed by a time of silence (1-2 minutes) to reflect, ponder and be with the word or phrase.

After the period of silence people are invited to share which word or phrase has touched his or her heart.

Second Reading : (usually by someone of the opposite sex from the first reader) This reading is for the purpose of “seeing” or “hearing” God/Christ in the text.

Each is invited to ponder the word or phrase that has touched the heart and is invited to ask where the word or phrase touches his or her life that day. How is God / Christ touching his/her life, his/her experience? How does the hearer experience God/ Christ reaching out to them through the text.

After the silence (2-3 minutes) people are invited to share what he/she has “seen” or “heard.”

Third Reading (by the first reader) is for the purpose of experiencing God/Christ calling us forth into doing or being. Members ask themselves what God/Christ in the text is calling them to do or to become today or this week.

After the silence (2-3 minutes) each shares for the last time

The exercise concludes with each person praying for the person on the right.

Note: Anyone may “pass” at any time.

The web has countless web sites devoted to this spiritual practice.