

Praying the Scriptures

The Ancient Tradition of Lectio Divina

Jesus came to show us, to tell us who God is and who we are. Lectio Divina is a prayer form that helps us to realize Jesus' message. It helps us to get past the historicity and the particular literary form of an unfamiliar era and cultural expression of Jesus and His message to us. How does Jesus and His message translate in my 21st century life experience? The Church has long preserved, guarded and nurtured God's way for us. Lectio Divina (Holy Reading) is a prayer form that enables each of us to know and live this WAY – where we are NOW as believers and followers of Jesus.

LECTIO DIVINA

I - READING: lectio

Gently read the Scriptures, slowly savoring and repeating the parts of the text that speak to the depths of your heart. Listen to the Word “with the ear of your heart”, and be willing to linger on portions of the text that seem to speak to you in a special way.

Through repetition, gently allow the text to percolate into your memory. Be willing to set the printed text aside and to listen quietly to the Word which you have taken into your heart.

II – MEDITATION: Ruminatio – meditation

Lovingly and slowly repeat the text you have internalized. Allow this interior “mulling over” to help the text “yield its savor”. Allow the text to interact with your memories, your hopes, your concerns. Don't be afraid of “distractions”; simply acknowledge them and let go of them, always returning to the portion of the Scriptures you have taken into your heart.

III – PRAYER: oratio

Let the text summon you to a place before the Lord all of yourself. Make the Word you have taken into yourself be a real word of consecration – a Word of blessing and a means of offering to the Lord your deepest hopes and concerns. Let the gentle repetition of the Word lead you into a dialogue with the God Who originally inspired the text, and Who has now used the Scriptures as a way of drawing you into His presence.

IV – CONTEMPLATION: contemplation

As you feel called to do, simply rest silently in the presence of the Lord. Be willing to let go of the text which has led you into God's presence. Enjoy the sweetness of silent communion with the God Who stands behind the Scriptures.

CONCLUSIONS

Recognize that these steps are not stages in an orderly process: they are a way of allowing the inner rhythms of our spiritual lives to become more and more charged with the presence of God. We are not to judge the quality of our Lectio by how much or how little time we spend in any of the above activities. The rhythm of Lectio Divina reflects the rhythm of our lives: we may move from one step to another without realizing it; and we may find several steps coexisting at the same time. Lectio Divina is simply a way of experiencing in our reading of the Scriptures what God intends our whole lives to become – a continuous experience of His presence, a continual and unending prayer.

(Use the Gospel reading of each day's Mass. The reference is published in the News and Herald and often in parish Bulletins. Allow 15-20 minutes. Some suggested "starters":

Lk. 1:39-56

Ps. 139

Jn. 15:11-17

Mt. 5:1-12

Lk. 15:11-24

Ps. 63

Mk. 2:1-12

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