

It (Lectio Divina) refers not only to the content of our reading, where priority is given to Holy Scripture, but extends to embrace writings of the Fathers of the Church, monastic writers, and theology especially of the 'sapiential' kind. The term also refers to a way of reading: slow and meditative, a 'listening reading' aimed not so much at mastering the text as being mastered by it - taught and enlightened by, devoted and surrendered to the Lord in his inspired and incarnate Word.

The regular and faithful practice of this prayer and reading feeds into, and is in turn nourished by, our regular liturgical prayer. Together they gradually transform our lives, our attitudes and our relationships, making us 'moulded to the pattern of his [God's] Son' (Romans 8:29).

<http://www.newnorcia.wa.edu.au/lectio.htm>

The Four Stages of Lectio Divina

STEP I: READING (LECTIO)

The first time you read or hear the reading you need to listen with "the ears of your heart" for a *literal* interpretation of the Word. You're getting acquainted with God through the Word. We learn to be silent to hear someone speak softly. Listen for the "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12). This gentle listening is an 'attunement' to the presence of God in that special part of God's creation which is the Scriptures. Listen in a spirit of silence and awe. The first time you hear the reading, ask yourself "what word or phrase 'strikes' me? What 'speaks' to me, or 'touches my heart'?"

STEP II: MEDITATION (MEDITATIO)

The second time you read the Word we reflect (ruminate) on the Word and become aware of the thoughts that rise to your awareness. Take in the Word and gently repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your thoughts, your hopes, your memories, and your desires. Don't *think* about it or *analyse* it, just *be* with it. Be aware of the feelings, questions or thoughts rising in you. In this second step or stage in Lectio Divina we develop a *moral* understanding of the Word. We allow God's word to become His word for us, a word that touches us and affects us at our deepest levels. A good example is the Blessed Virgin Mary "pondering in her heart" what she saw and heard of Christ (Luke 2:19). During this time of reflection we are becoming friendly with God and the moral level of consciousness is developing.

STEP III: PRAYER (ORATIO)

This third level of consciousness is the Allegorical level which requires a Spiritual level of listening. During this time a spontaneous, loving conversation with God may arise out of the silence, which is your response to God's presence and action within you. A deep friendship is growing as we allow the word that we have taken in, and on which we are pondering, to touch and change our deepest selves. At this level of prayer, a prayer of *contrition* may flow from your heart in response to God's word in you. Or maybe it's a prayer of *praise*, *petition* or *thanksgiving*. Allow yourself to be touched and changed by the word of God.

STEP IV: CONTEMPLATION (CONTEMPLATIO)

We simply rest in the presence of the one who has used His word as a means of inviting us to accept His transforming embrace. We call this level, Union of Life or the unitive level of consciousness. The Holy Spirit is acting in you completely at this level. This is characterised by wordless, quiet rest in the presence of the One who loves us. We practice silence, letting go of our own words; this time simply enjoying the experience of being in the presence of God.

Supplementary Stages

You could say that there are actually 6 stages to Lectio Divina if you were to include the fifth step of making a resolution, and the sixth step of carrying the word throughout the day:

STEP V: MAKING A RESOLUTION

As a response to what we have meditated upon, we need to renew our commitment to the Gospel. We do this in a practical way by deciding to do some small and realistic thing to change. The change is to lead us more deeply into trust by way of humility.

STEP VI: CARRY THE WORD

To be able to carry the word, phrase or sentence you have been meditating upon throughout the day, repeat it to yourself again and again as you go about your daily tasks, allowing it to bring you to a new life in Christ. In other words, you are making the words of scripture you have been meditating upon into an aspiration (or what is known as an ejaculatory prayer) to further help you to assimilate your life to the Gospel.



LECTIO DIVINA

What Some of the Saints Have Said:

- + “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.” (St Jerome)
- + “I knew that the Word was present by the movement of my heart; I perceived the power of the Word. The Word is living and effective. As soon as it entered my heart, it inspired my heart which was previously dull. It began to root out and destroy, to build and to plant, to water the dry places within me and to illuminate the darkness, to open what was shut, to warm the chill, to make the crooked ways straight... The Word has renewed and remade my inmost being.”
(St Bernard of Clairvaux)
- + Through Lectio Divina we “learn to know the heart of God, through the words of God..” (St Gregory the Great)
- + “In the beginning of time, before the world was ever made; before the universe existed, God spoke a Word into an eternal silence. And today, only in that silence, can that Word be heard..” (St John of the Cross)
- + “In the beginning was the Word and Word was with God; and the Word was God. He was the with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him. All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of all people, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower.” (1 John 1:1-5)
- + “The Word of God is something alive and active: it cuts like any double edged sword but more finely: it can slip through the place where the soul is divided from the spirit ... it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts.” (Hebrews 4:12-13)

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This is a form of prayer that has been used in the Church for fifteen centuries. Its origin has been attributed to St. Benedict. It involves reading a scripture passage or sacred reading four times with a few minutes of silence between each reading, followed by prayerful reflection upon what is read, and sharing these thoughts with Our Blessed Lord. We are building a relationship with God through this process.

Prayer as Relationship is what Lectio Divina is about. The most ancient method of developing the friendship of Christ is by using scripture as topics of conversation with Christ. We grow through developing the “Senses of Scripture” (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 115-117).