

2. Lectio Divina

Lectio divina is a Latin word, which means “divine reading” or more often translated as “spiritual reading,” and describes a way of reading the Scriptures where we gradually let go of our own agenda and open ourselves to what God wants to say to us. Scripture offers first-hand access to the word of God and tells the story of human

salvation. Catholics can pray the Scriptures through a method known as *lectio divina* to become more attuned to the word of God. Also, make prayers of spiritual communion when you can. Here’s a short, traditional one: *I wish, my Lord, to receive you, with the purity, humility, and devotion with which your most holy mother received you, with the spirit and fervor of the saints.*

A key means to reinvigorate the life of our parishes, our communities and our own prayer lives is this ancient practice of *lectio divina*. In “*Evangelii Gaudium*,” paragraph 264, Pope Francis reminds us that “the best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart. If we approach it in this way, its beauty will amaze and constantly excite us. But if this is to come about, we need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realize ever anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life. There is nothing more precious which we can give to others.”

The first stage in the process is *lectio* (reading), where we read the word of God, slowly and reflectively so that it can take root in us. You allow the words and or verses to capture your heart as God speaks to your heart.

The second stage is *meditatio* (reflection), where we think about the text that we have chosen and ponder it in our hearts so we can take from it what God wants to give us. Through the Scripture passage, you may imagine yourself at the scene, images, sounds and thoughts all come to mind to draw you even more deeply into the passage.

The third stage is *oratio* (response), where we leave our thinking aside and simply let our hearts speak to God. This response is inspired by our reflection on the word of God. This stage moves you to a prayerful response as you converse with the Lord.

The final stage of *lectio divina* is *contemplatio* (rest), where we let go of our own ideas, plans and meditations and we simply rest in the word of God, a holy rest which renews and sustains us. Through this phase your attention is centered on God, and you allow him to refresh and restore you for a new beginning.



Lectio Divina — Praying with Scripture

This ancient tradition is a beautiful way of praying with the Bible and is critical to the New Evangelization, so that our members are energized continuously on the word of God, both at Mass and also in our own personal or group prayer.

The *Lectio Divina* Process

1. *Lectio* — Reading

- Select a passage from Scripture.
- Read through the passage a few times and allow the words to capture your attention and your being. In this way, begin to listen as God speaks to your heart.

2. *Meditatio* — Meditation

- During this phase, seek to acquire the mind of Christ and learn what he wants to reveal to you.
- As you read, certain words, phrases or even thoughts might have jumped out at you. Take some time during this stage to consider why these phrases and words might have jumped out at you.
- Imagine yourself as an observer in the Scripture passage, reflecting on what you see, hear, taste, touch and to what and whom you are drawn to.
- Consider how the words relate to your life today. At the end of your prayer, stop writing and speaking. Focus on the Lord, rest in him and enjoy being close to him in love.

3. *Oratio* — Praying

- During this phase, pray from your heart and respond to what Jesus has spoken to you in the holy words of Scripture.
- Allow the grace of these words, images and thoughts to move you to a heartfelt prayer.
- Ask Jesus personally for help, guidance, insight and direction. Find yourself talking to him naturally.

4. *Contemplatio* — Contemplation

- During this time, find yourself resting with and in the Lord. Rest in his presence so that the very core of your being is stilled.
- Center your attention on God.
- Allow the word of God to stir within you the courage, strength, energy and guidance for a fresh start and a new beginning.

“There is one particular way of listening to what the Lord wishes to tell us in his word and of letting ourselves be transformed by the Spirit. It is what we call *lectio divina*. It consists of reading God’s word in a moment of prayer and allowing it to enlighten and renew us.” – Pope Francis (“*Evangelii Gaudium*,” para. 152)

“I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of *lectio divina*: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart. If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church — I am convinced of it — a new spiritual springtime.”

— Pope Benedict XVI (Address Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of “*Dei Verbum*”)

“It is especially necessary that listening to the word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid tradition of *lectio divina*, which draws from the biblical text the living word which questions, directs and shapes our lives.”

— St. John Paul II (“*Novo Millennio Ineunte*,” para. 39)