

## LECTIO DIVINA

### The rhythm of an ancient prayer tradition called “holy reading” or “tuning in” to the Lord

During this prayer, the Word of God in Sacred Scripture is read four times. It is important that you choose beforehand some passage from Scripture that is meaningful to you. It is wise to begin to learn this rhythm of prayer by selecting words from one of the Gospels, especially a parable or a miracle of our Lord Jesus.

**1 LECTIO: “Speak Lord, for I am listening.” Read the selected passage slowly and reverently. If I am alone it may be good to read it aloud. Let me hear the words spoken to me personally by the Lord.** I let the words resound in my mind and heart. I am attentive to the Lord speaking to me. **Let me be attentive to notice one or two words or actions of the Lord**, an action, some reaction or response of other persons in the passage somehow draw my attention. Jesus is emphasizing **one or the other detail** of what I have read. In faith I become aware that Jesus is addressing me personally, striving to get my attention.

After a few moments of silence I recall to myself **which word, action or detail remains with me more vividly and meaningfully**. I say, **“Thank you Lord for bringing this to my awareness. Your word is alive for me.”**

**2 MEDITATIO Read the same passage a second time, slowly, attentively and without rushing.**

I recall the word or action I noticed in the first reading, and I invite, allow, this word to engage me. I begin to let this word or action penetrate **into my life’s experience**. I ask for the grace to see new connections surface within the context of my own life in relationship with the words or actions that became more in evidence during the Lectio stage above. These words or actions are then not simply something said or written in the past. They are not a generic, informative message from the radio or TV, but rather they are **personally addressed by the Lord who is present personally to me**. Visualizing this Scripture from sacred art may help a me to “get into the scene,” to see the place, and to image the Lord interacting with others and with me. Jesus is a good story teller and a man of deep compassion. He desires to draw us to himself to come to him and listen to his word.

This gives me the courage and the inspiration to personally reflect on how the word of the Lord and my life are related. Meditation is like mulling over the word of God so that it begins to descend into my heart, and cause me to reflect on my life. The word thus addressed to me by the Lord becomes strength in my weakness and my temptations, forgiveness for my sins, encouragement in my disappointments, hope in trials, and joy in my sadness. Meditation is like refreshment and rest for my weary soul and healing balm poured into my wounds.

### **3 ORATIO I read the same passage a third time, slowly, attentively and without rushing.**

“Friend speaks to friend.” Even though there was a beginning of a conversation with the Lord in the Meditatio above, the Oratio stage is centered more on speaking directly **to** the Lord and less on reflecting **about** him or **about** my life. This takes courage and trust as a friend speaks in confidence to a friend. “Lord, I’m now more at home with “you” and “me” here alone together.” As we grow in Lectio Divina, we begin to notice that at first the Oratio stage is rather short, but as time goes on it grows. There can be more silence within this stage because the words are coming more from me and not from the text of Scripture. I also want more silence for listening. I also find it easier to set the stage and the atmosphere of putting myself into the scene of the Gospel passage. It is easier to speak to someone if I have some visible image of the person. Sacred art helps us. That is why many people find a favorite image of Jesus, the Father, or Mary or one of the saints so helpful. Some find lighting a vigil light or a candle to be helpful as well. Others, may not prefer that or may find that a distraction.

### **4 CONTEMPLATIO I read the same passage a fourth time, attentively and without rushing.**

Union and intimacy. I allow myself to experience God’s love for me personally. I strive to say little but simply be present to the Lord and surrender, without effort, but simply resting in God’s presence very much like a little child allows him or herself to be embraced by his mother or father. Although wordless prayer does not come easily at the beginning, as I in Lectio Divina there is a growing sense of abandoning myself into God’s care and simply being there for him and with him—as an infant is present in the arms of his/her mother or father. Closing my eyes can be of help, so that I can gaze inwardly into my heart into the inner chamber of my “self”.

**Note:** The stages of Lectio Divina are not four separate compartments. Rather they are distinct but intertwining dynamics, with one dynamic predominating in any given stage. One stage may pre-dominate and last longer, while another may be very brief. Depending on circumstances, a person may not even “journey” through all four stages. This is not a “project” to be done “perfectly” or to get “right.” It’s like “hanging out” with the Lord. He simply wants to be with me. Like an orchestra with varied instruments, **these stages create one symphony of listening and speaking to God and being present with him who is present with me. He loves me.**