

Lectio Divina



An introduction to
sacred reading

Ignatian Spirituality

Ignatian Spirituality originates with St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order. A former courtier and soldier, St. Ignatius gave himself to Christ during recuperation from a war wound. His book, *The Spiritual Exercises*, epitomizes his spirituality and serves as the basis for the work of spiritual companions and directors.

Central to Ignatius' spirituality is the belief that God speaks to us through the events experienced in our everyday lives. Other characteristics of his spirituality include:

Relating to people as individuals

God calls each individual in a particular way, and so, rather than impose their own way on anyone, spiritual or retreat directors listen to what God may be saying in the experience of each person's life.

Motivated by a sense of service or mission

Ignatian spirituality encourages a relationship that produces commitment to a common cause.

Positive attitude toward all things

St. Ignatius affirmed that all things in creation are made by God and given as gifts of love for our good, a revelation of Himself that we might respond to God appropriately.

Need for constant discernment

Where is God present in the world today and where is God calling us? While God's gifts are for everyone, we must discern which are meant for us, at each moment and to what extent, and which are not.

The word is allowed simply to be there, letting its weight, its own gravity, press upon us till it gives form to the attitude of our heart.

If each day a word of the Lord can truly come alive for us and can form our mind and heart, we will come indeed to live by faith as just persons; we will have that mind of Christ.

Fr. Basil Pennington

Above all it's the Gospels that occupy my mind when I'm at prayer; my poor soul has so many needs, and yet this is the one thing needful. I'm always finding fresh lights there, hidden and enthralling meanings.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux



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One does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.” Mt. 4:4

What is Lectio Divina?

Lectio Divina (“divine reading” in Latin) is an ancient form of Christian prayer that offers a way to consciously deepen our relationship with God. The process is simple and easy to learn. In addition to a Bible, you only need to bring your openness and desire to be challenged and transformed by God’s Word.

Rooted in Scripture, Lectio encourages us to become receptive to the living Word of God, allowing it to form us into the image of Christ. God begins the conversation as we read and reflect on a short passage of Scripture.

In the Lectio process, first God speaks and we listen with our heart. Then we speak and God listens. Through this sharing, a deeper relationship with the living God is developed and nurtured as we sit in the presence of the One who loves us and wants us to know that love. Through Lectio, God transforms us to see as God sees and love as God loves so that we put on the “mind of Christ.”

What Lectio is not

- A Bible Study
- Reading to get a general meaning
- Reading for information
- Analyzing the text

Where and when to pray

The main condition for a place for Lectio is somewhere that is quiet. God speaks gently, frequently in a whisper. Noisy places can distract and drown out the conversation. Any quiet place can become a “prayer room” — a church, a garden bench, a cozy spot in your home or your own bedroom.

The process for Lectio Divina

Preparation:

Be open to be transformed by God’s Word. Choose a passage from Scripture that is not too long. Quiet your body and mind. Pray to the Holy Spirit, asking for openness, receptivity and awareness of God speaking to you.

Phases:

Lectio Divina consists of four phases that take you from reading Scripture, to meditation on its personal meaning, to spontaneous prayer and then to a silent resting with God in love. The direction of this prayer is toward simplicity and depth.

1) Read (*Lectio*)

Read the passage slowly and prayerfully several times with attentiveness and receptivity. Place yourself in the scene and listen with your heart. A word, phrase or image may stand out or may seem significant. Gently repeat it; savor, relish, absorb it. Let it speak to your heart.

2) Reflect (*Meditatio*)

When a word or phrase touches you, take time to reflect and ponder it. Be aware of its personal meaning for you in the here and now. Notice how it may be giving



you insight or challenging you. Perhaps it is calling you to some action or giving a sense of peace, comfort, hope, etc. You may even find that this word or phrase stays with you beyond the time of prayer into the rest of the day.

3) Respond (*Oratio*)

As you reflect, a prayer may arise within you. This speaking with God may express your feelings such as longing, gratitude, praise, repentance, intercession, awe or regret. Let your heart speak to God as the Spirit moves you.

4) Rest (*Contemplatio*)

Let go of your ideas, reflections and dialogue. Allow the word to move from head to heart. Silently rest in God’s presence, experiencing God’s acceptance and love. As you rest in God, God gradually transforms you from within. This transformation will have an effect on the way you are, the way you live, the way you act.

Concluding Prayer:

This may be the Lord’s Prayer, a short psalm of thanksgiving, or your prayer based on the passage you just prayed.