

# LECTIO DIVINA

## Praying with Scripture

### Intro

The Church speaks of “the need for a prayerful approach” to Scripture as a “fundamental element in the spiritual life of *every believer*,” not simply as an optional add-on for “really holy” people like priests, vowed religious, or contemplative mystics. How can we do this with confidence? Do we randomly open the Bible and pray a “Hail Mary”? Do we need special expertise? How do we pray with Scripture in a Catholic way?

*Lectio Divina is a contemplative method of praying with the Scriptures that traces to the earliest centuries of Christianity. Lectio Divina literally translates “divine reading.”*

The beauty of Lectio Divina is that it teaches us to *slow down and savor God’s Word*. As we move through the Scriptures more deliberately we *become more receptive* and learn to *recognize how God speaks to us* and our current circumstances through the Scriptures.

For centuries, people have found Lectio Divina life-changing- because it has taught them to recognize God’s voice!

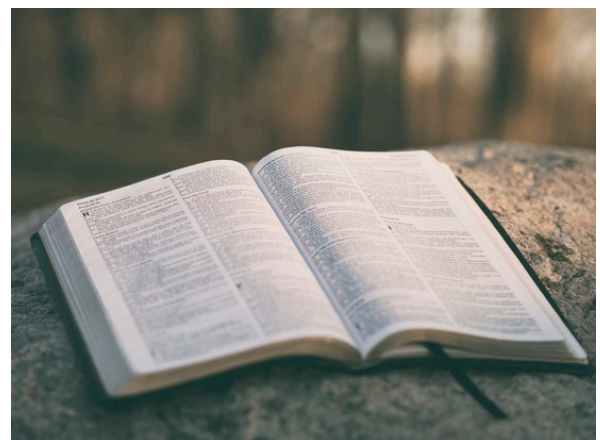
### Getting Started

Choose a Biblical passage to pray with. You could choose the Gospel passage from the lectionary, or another passage. Often, CBSM participants will choose to do Lectio Divina with a short selection from their current week’s assigned readings. You’ll want to choose a relatively short passage, somewhere between 3 and 12 verses. It’s hard to move slowly through a long passage.

Some good passages to begin with:

- *Psalm 139 (God’s Closeness)*
- *Isaiah 43:1-6 (God’s Promises)*
- *Mark 4:35-41 (Calming of Storm)*
- *Mark 10:46-52 (Jesus Heals the Blind Man)*

As you begin, take slow deep breaths and invite the Holy Spirit to lead you.



# 1. Lectio

**Read the passage 2x to begin.** Ask, “What does the biblical text say in itself?” “What’s the plain meaning?” and/or “What’s happening?” You are encouraged to read the passage a third or even a fourth time to absorb more of the plain meaning of the text. Notice any words or phrases that catch your attention. If you get distracted, gently bring yourself back to the text.

## 2. Meditatio

**Silently ponder the text.** Give yourself permission to linger and ponder the words of the text, especially those that catch your attention. The Holy Spirit may be speaking to you! Ask, “What does this biblical text say to me [or us]?” Meditation is not the emptying of one’s mind, but rather “a prayerful quest engaging thought, imagination, emotion, and desire” (CCC 2723). St. Ignatius of Loyola teaches us to meditate by imagining what God sees in the text we’re praying with – what is God’s perspective? St. Ignatius also teaches us to meditate by imagining ourselves as a character in the passage and vividly constructing the scene – what sounds am I hearing? What does it smell like? As you ponder, be attentive to your reactions, emotions, desires, and thoughts. Let yourself be moved and challenged.

## 3. Oratio

**Speak to God in conversation.** Steps 1 and 2 focus on listening; now it’s time to respond to what God has [or has not] been filling us with. “What do we say to the Lord in response to his word?” Requests, thanks, words of praise or adoration, questions of

frustration or doubt, or even emotions of sadness beyond words are all appropriate responses. It’s okay for it to be informal and conversational – be yourself, e.g. “Are you telling me \_\_\_\_\_?” or “Lord, I don’t know why but this phrase \_\_\_\_\_ is sticking with me, why?” Speak to the Lord, He loves you! Allow silence to hear how God is communicating back to you.

## 4. Contemplatio

**Lord, show me how to receive.** This step is a gift from God. Sometimes God will give an experience of His love, or a deeper knowledge of His character. Allow God to gently reveal and guide you in whatever way God wills. This is our invitation to “put on Christ” to accept the gifts of wisdom and vision God bestows on us, of “seeing and judging reality” the way God does. We may find God drawing our attention to a past, present, or future application of the text to our own attitude, outlook, actions, beliefs, opinions, or relationships. Some people choose to read the passage again, and/or savor the word or phrase that God called them to in earlier steps.

## 5. Actio

**Take action.** This is the ultimate goal of lectio divina— a lifetime of friendship with God “which moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity.” To aid in this process, some people find it useful to keep a journal and write down insights from God. Whether your experience of Lectio Divina was mind-blowing or somewhat awkward, return to the practice tomorrow. God has more to give you!