

ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER DISCERNMENT PROCESS

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LECTIO DIVINA GUIDE

What is *Lectio Divina*?

Many Catholics struggle to focus when they pray, especially with not getting much out of using Scripture when they do. This document is a guide for how to pray with Scripture utilizing what is known as *lectio divina*.

Lectio divina is an ancient method for praying with Scripture that allows this experience to become more than merely analyzing the text like a scholar. Instead, with practice, praying with the Bible in this way can become more about hearing God's voice present in his Word, like a son or daughter. It is one of the most ancient forms of prayer and meditation in the Church's tradition, often appearing in early Church fathers and other theologians' writings.

We generally credit a twelfth-century Carthusian monk named Guido for the traditional division of the practice of *lectio divina* into four steps: *lectio* (read), *meditatio* (meditate, or think), *oratio* (pray), and *contemplatio* (contemplate). Over the twenty minutes a day that we will be praying with a particular passage of Scripture, these four steps will be a way of organizing our time to allow the word of God to impact us fully. While *lectio divina* is more art than science, a brief primer on the method is found below.

How to pray *Lectio Divina*

Before step one, as you sit down to pray, begin by inviting the Holy Spirit into your prayer time. Pray for the grace to listen with your heart to the Word. Remember that He is present to us always, and we turn our attention to him to focus on our relationship when we pray. Prayer is not just about encountering our own thoughts or quieting our minds but is about coming face to face with the three Persons in the one God who knows us and loves us personally. After we have done this first step, we can turn to the four stages of *lectio divina*:

- 1. *Lectio (read)*:** Read the chapter, slowly (sometimes reading it aloud is helpful.)
- 2. *Meditatio (meditate)*:** Reread the chapter and pay close attention to the words. Note a word, phrase, or sentence that stood out to you. Think deeply



into the passage for why these words stand out to you. Some also benefit from a visual type of meditation that places them in the story, asking questions like, “What am I seeing, thinking, or who am I in this scene?”

- 3. *Oratio (pray)*:** Turn your thoughts specifically to the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. Ask him how he is speaking in this passage to you personally. Converse naturally with him, sharing your thoughts and paying attention to how he moves your mind and heart as well.
- 4. *Contemplatio (contemplate)*:** Sit peacefully, turning your mind and will toward the God who knows you, soaking the mystery of his immense love. Be led into silence to simply be with God.

As Jeremiah the prophet said, “When I encountered your words, I devoured them; your words were my joy, the happiness of my heart.” These four steps will help us to encounter God’s words so that they can, indeed, become a source of joy.

Often, as we pray with Scripture, a particular word or sentence will “pop-out” off the page as if the Holy Spirit is suggesting that we notice and ponder those words more deeply. As this happens for you, begin to note these words, highlight them, and take time throughout the rest of your prayer time to ask: Lord, what is it you are saying to me by having me notice these particular words. How can I receive these as your words into my life? Is Jesus speaking these words to you today? Converse with Jesus.

May making *lectio divina* a regular part of your routine of prayer be a source of deeper insight into the Word of God and closer connection to the Lord.

