



Tools for Transformation

Lectio Divina: a way of reading scripture

Lectio Divina (lek-see-o de-vee-na) is one method of prayerful reading of scripture that is fostered by all traditions of Christian Spirituality. Sometimes this method is translated as “meditative reading” or “spiritual reading”. It would be better called “prayer of the listening heart” because many people, including the monks who first used this method in early Christian times, could not read! The Lectio of Lectio Divina is a listening with the heart, as one does quite naturally and spontaneously while appreciating a sunset, or when pondering with fondness any touching human experience. One also listens with the heart when one reads slowly, with pauses, and relishes or drinks in the words of scripture. This listening with the heart leads naturally to reflection upon scripture, an experience, or an event. From this reflection, one is led naturally to respond to God, and in time one becomes more and more open to the influence of God’s Spirit.

When you do Lectio Divina while reading, read the material slowly, pausing periodically to allow the words and phrases to enter your heart. When a thought resonates deeply, stay with it, allowing the fullness of it to penetrate your being. Relish the word received. Respond authentically and spontaneously as in a dialogue.

Adapted from J. Veltri, S.J., Orientations, V2, Part B

How to practice Lectio Divina:

There are many ways to use Lectio Divina. However, there is a basic flow that is common to them all. Think of this flow not so much as steps to follow, but movements you find yourself in. The point is to read for transformation, relationship and encounter with God, not merely for information. The movements below are fairly typical of most outlines for Lectio Divina. They will give you a good feel for the practice which you can adapt as needed.

Prepare: Find somewhere with minimal distractions. Choose a passage to which you feel drawn - no more than 6 to 8 verses. Ask for God's grace and spend some time in silence, becoming aware of God's presence and allowing the busyness of life to subside (Psalm 46:10).

Read: Read the passage several times, slowly and reflectively, pausing often. Listen for a word or phrase that moves your heart, resonates, or strikes you deeply. Stay with this word and savour it, pondering it in your heart. Take your time.

Reflect: Read the passage again and consider what God's gift to you might be. If the passage is a story, place yourself in the scene. Give some time to explore your feelings, thoughts, and perceptions. How is your life touched by the word or phrase? What is in your life right now that needs to hear this word?

Respond: Read the passage again. What is your response to God based on what you have read and encountered? Speak authentically to God from your heart. Share the feelings the word has aroused. What gift have you received during this prayer time? What invitation or challenge has God given? Pay attention to how God is inviting you to respond.

Rest: You've listened, heard and responded to God. Now you are simply invited to rest in the Word of God. Read the passage one last time in this posture of yieldedness. From this place of personal encounter with God, you will return to life and carry this word with you to see it become part of your life.

*Adapted from Lorna Jones (S.D.) of St. Stephen's University
& Sacred Rhythms by Ruth Haley Barton*

