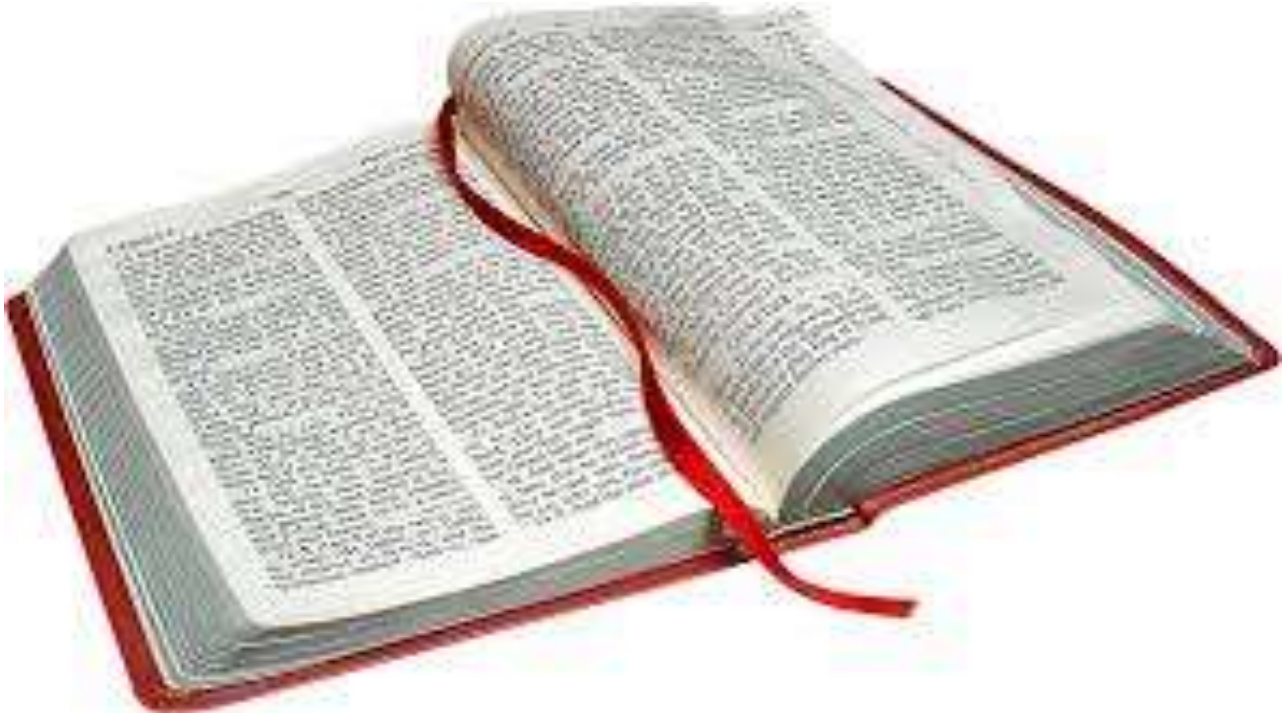


# THE ART OF LECTIO DIVINA



Lectio Divina is a Latin term, which roughly translates as 'Divine Reading'. It invites us to chew, savour and mull over God's words quietly, slowly and intently. It can be used individually or in a group setting.

Lectio traditionally has a four-step approach:

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| • Reading       | Lectio       |
| • Meditation    | Meditatio    |
| • Prayer        | Oratio       |
| • Contemplation | Contemplatio |

## Guidelines for the individual

- 1) The first thing to do is to **choose a text** – psalms and gospel stories are good places to start.
- 2) Settle yourself down – perhaps use a formal **stilling** exercise or centering prayer.
- 3) Ask God to touch you through the Scripture passage. Ask that you might be open to the gift only God knows you need today. Only the Holy Spirit can bring the Word to life. Let your breathing settle and deepen as you **invite the spirit to pray in you afresh.**
- 4) **Read** the chosen text slowly, very, very slowly with an open mind. Don't study the text – just read it. This is the *lectio*. You may find reading it aloud helps.
- 5) When a sentence, or **phrase or word 'resonates'**, 'lights up' or 'rings a bell' put the Bible down. This is where the '*meditatio*' or **meditation** begins.
- 6) Gently **repeat the phrase or word** again and again within your heart. There is no need to imagine or try to feel anything. The repetition is to allow yourself to ruminate and feed on the words at an intuitive level. In time you may become aware of a general impression the words have made on you. This is the time of the '*oratio*' or **prayerful response.**
- 7) Express to God as simply as you can the impression the words have made on you. You may wish to **thank Him** or to ask questions, or just **remain in loving silence**, appreciating the grace or attitude that the Scripture has instilled. Your prayer may move into **contemplation**, a simple **being with God** in which all you are aware of is that you are being attracted to God like a compass needle swinging towards north.



- 8) After a time distractions will set in. You may close with the Lord's Prayer or a general thanksgiving. If distraction sets in before you are ready to finish begin again at the point you left off and expected to be touched by another phrase or word.

### **Guidelines for a group setting**

When lectio divina is shared in a group, the passage (or in this case, the poem) is read out loud two or three times. Tonight we suggest you read it twice. Each reading is guided by a focus question to help the group engage deeply with what is read. Then, after each reading, there is a period of silence of between two and ten minutes for meditation, prayer and resting in God's presence. In this way we "Let the Word of God descend from the mind to the heart." We listen for God's word to us and together we hold one another in God's presence. Group members then share briefly, personally and prayerfully.

- 1) Focus question before the first reading:  
'What one word or phrase especially touches your heart?'  
Read the passage/poem aloud.  
Leave a patch of silence.  
Go round the group sharing (without comment) the word/phrase.
- 2) Focus question before the second reading:  
'What does this passage call you to do? What is your personal invitation from the Lord?'  
Someone else reads the passage/poem again.  
Leave a patch of silence.  
Go round the group sharing without comment.

Whether one prays individually or in a group, Lectio Divina is a flexible and easy way to pray. One first listens, notes what is given and responds in a way one is directed by the Holy Spirit.

## THE PLACE I WANT TO GET BACK TO - Mary Oliver

The place I want to get back to is where  
in the pinewoods  
in the moments between  
the darkness

and first light  
two deer  
came walking down the hill  
and when they saw me

they said to each other, okay,  
this one is okay,  
let's see who she is  
and why she is sitting

on the ground like that,  
so quiet, as if  
asleep, or in a dream,  
but, anyway, harmless;

and so they came  
on their slender legs  
and gazed upon me  
not unlike the way

I go out to the dunes and look  
and look and look  
into the faces of the flowers;  
and then one of them leaned forward

and nuzzled my hand, and what can my life  
bring to me that could exceed  
that brief moment?  
For twenty years

I have gone every day to the same woods,  
not waiting, exactly, just lingering.  
Such gifts, bestowed,  
can't be repeated.

If you want to talk about this  
come to visit. I live in the house  
near the corner, which I have named  
*Gratitude*.