

About Lectio Divina

Background

Lectio Divina is a Latin phrase that literally translates into Divine Reading. It's an ancient meditative practice that has been practiced by monastics (monks and nuns) for more than a thousand years, even before the widespread availability of written texts. As such, the emphasis is not so much on reading but on listening with great attention.

What Is Lectio Divina (in theory)?

"Lectio is an experiential hearing of the Word of God. It is a hearing in the context of a certain listening. Here the faith dimension of lectio comes into play. Lectio is listening to a Person present. God lives in his Word. The Word is a Divine Presence. It may be the lips of another, the reader in church or in the Bible-sharing group, or our own lips that now pronounce the words, but it is God who speaks them, speaks them to us to be heard by us, making himself present, as any lover might, by communicating his love." - Fr. M. Basil Pennington

What is Lectio Divina (in practice)?

Lectio is listening and reflecting on Scripture. It involves "chewing" on a Scripture passage for a period of time and moving from initial listening, to discerning meaning, to acting on God's message to us in the context of our lives. It requires silence and sitting still, whether practiced in private or in a group. In shared Lectio, we can listen to and be inspired by how God speaks to and through others, gaining a new perspective on Scripture and on living as a Disciple of Jesus.

Helpful Dispositions

- **Faith.** A firm belief that the Word of God *is* the Word of God. When we come to Lectio empowered by faith, we can tune in to the Word beamed to us by God, whether it is coming to us through the printed page, the voice of a reader, or our own inner voice.
- **Humility.** Humility is the acceptance of our profound ignorance with regard to God as well as to many other things. We come to our listening hungry and thirsty, filled with longing and need. And God who is mighty does great things for us. He fills the hungry with good things.
- **Openness.** One thing that can hamper our ability to pray like this is a subtle or not-so-subtle attitude that says: "I've heard all this before." We're not simply reading a book; we are meeting a Person, a Divine Person, the God who loves us and who has a wondrous plan for us.