

# N.E.T. Catholic

**All Saints**



**Holy Cross**



**Saint Anthony**



Proclaimers of the word  
Handbook

Dear Proclaimers of the Word,

Thank you so much for accepting God's call to be God's mouthpiece and feed God's people at the table of the Word. We know that this will require some effort on your part but we are confident that it will truly nourish your faith and enrich your experience of the Mass. This is a great service to the community. When the Word of God is proclaimed properly it "is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart" Hebrews 4:12

We will all work together to make this a very positive experience for you. It will be very helpful if you can arrive about 10 minutes early when you are scheduled for your ministry. That will allow you enough time to get ready and pray before Mass so that you do not feel nervous and rushed.

If you can serve at N.E.T. Catholic special services, such as Holy Days of Obligation, Holy Week, etc. and/or once in a while serve at our N.E.T. Catholic Sunday afternoon Masses, that will be tremendously helpful and much appreciated.

Please let us know if you will be away, or if there are times of the year during which you should not be scheduled for your ministry. If you are scheduled and something comes up, please try to find a sub and/or please let us know.

Thank you,  
Fr. Daniel

I want to receive the ministry schedule via email at: \_\_\_\_\_

I would be happy to serve at special liturgies    yes\_\_\_\_\_ no\_\_\_\_\_

I be scheduled to serve at the following weekend Masses:

Saturday 4:30 pm @ St.A \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday 8:30 am @ H.C. \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday 10:30 am @ A.S. \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday 2:00 pm @ St. A \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return to Fr. Daniel at your earliest convenience.*



**Prayer for  
Proclaimers of the Word:**

Heavenly Father, I ask for your grace as I proclaim your Word to the people of my Parish. I ask that when I speak it will be your voice they hear, and be inspired to live according to that Word. I ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God for ever and ever.

Amen

## The Ministry of Proclaimer of the Word

This ministry is properly called the ministry of proclaimers of the Word, because the Word of God is not meant to be simply read, but to be proclaimed as living word of life. For this reason this ministry **is not to be called the ministry of readers.**

This ministry **is not to be called the ministry of lectors** either, because lectors are a minor order in the Church that in our Diocese is only conferred upon those preparing for the major orders of Diaconate and Sacred Priesthood.

Scripture itself tells us that God's word is "living and active." His Word is not primarily a written text that is fixed and codified, but a Word spoken and proclaimed in the midst of a community of faith. His Word brings forth creation and whenever it is spoken anew it recreates. It is by his Word that Israel was brought into being and continually challenged to renew its faithfulness to Him; it is by His Word that the Church was called into being and constantly challenged to renew and reform itself that Israel was brought into being and continually called to renew its faithfulness to Him; it is by His Word that the Church was called into being and constantly challenged to renew and reform itself. God's Word, therefore, is a Word with a power beyond all other words. He speaks this Word to reveal Himself to us but also to reveal to us our own deepest nature. It is this Word which tells us that we are His people, that our destiny is intrinsically interwoven with His life. And, more than this, it is by this Word that He makes Himself present to us. For this reason, the Church has never known a sacramental celebration apart from the proclamation of God's Word. Indeed such a celebration could not be a sacrament. God establishes his presence by his Word and the power of that presence once again calls a community into being to receive God's work and to graciously respond. The real presence of another speaking to us demands a response; and so too, the Word of God. He calls us by this Word so that we can live by this Word. As we understand the Word more and more deeply, we come to recognize that we must change—thus, the fruit of God's Word truly heard and attended to always produced renewal, a renewal that

has at its heart is a recognition of our origins as his people. God has spoken his definitive Word to us in Jesus Christ. It is He who is the living and effective Word of God in the worshipping community. The ultimate purpose, therefore, of celebrating God's Word is not to read biblical texts but to encounter Jesus in a manner that elicits from us a unified response of living fidelity. Our celebration of the Word in the Eucharistic celebration is above all else a celebration of the presence of Jesus. A sacramental celebration of the Word of God is never mere reading of texts. It is the public proclamation in the midst of the assembled faithful of who God is, where God can be found and how God works through us. It is a sacramental event. When the Word is truly proclaimed and heard—things happen. It becomes the experience of the power and presence of the living God in this community, here and new. It is the discovery that the great works of God are not simply history but are enacted anew in our own community as we gather to worship.

## **Preparation at home**

*“He said to me: Son of man, eat what you find here: eat this scroll, then go, speak to the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Son of man, he said to me, feed your stomach and fill your belly with this scroll I am giving you. I ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. Then he said to me, Son of man, go now to the house of Israel, and speak my words to them.” Ezekiel 3:1-4*

1. Check the Liturgical Ministers Schedule to see if you are Proclaimer of the Word (P.O.W.) A or B. If you are A, that means you will be making the announcements before Mass begins and proclaiming the First Reading. If you are B, that means you will be reading the intentions in the Universal Prayer and carrying the Book of the Gospels during the entrance procession (if the Deacon is not present) and that you will be proclaiming the Second Reading. If you do not feel comfortable processing with the Book of the Gospels, ask P.O.W.- A to do it for you. See addendum at the end of this handbook for an example of the Universal Prayer and Announcements. You will always find these on the ambo as well as a copy on the counter in the

sacristy. Make sure to read over them before Mass begins to make sure you can understand them and read them properly.

2. Find the readings for the proper weekend in your Proclaimers of the Word workbook. **If there is more than one option for the reading you are supposed to proclaim check the Liturgical Calendar on page 4 of our bulletin. You will always find the priest's choice of reading listed there.**

3. Identify the type of passage you are to read. Is it a story? Is it a dialogue between different characters or voices? Is it a prophecy, a letter, a series of laws, a parable, a witty saying, or a song? The depth of your understanding will be visible to the congregation.

4. Ask yourself a few questions about the meaning

5. Use your imagination to visualize action passages and narratives. See in your mind's eye what is taking place. Imagine how those involved are feeling, why they act the way they do.

6. Pick out the most important sentence or phrase. Try to communicate it above all else.

7. Check the pronunciation of unfamiliar names in the scriptures in the workbook. If you happen to trip over one while proclaiming, move on; your job is to convey the meaning of the passage as a whole.

8. **Pray with the text**, letting a given phrase or admonition sink slowly inside you. See the addendum at the end of this handbook for some guidance on how to pray with scripture.

9. After you understand the essence of the passage, practice reading aloud in front of a mirror or for family or friends. Notice how often you look up and make eye contact as you read.

10. Read intelligently, in a lively manner, and when indicated, conversationally.

11. Vary your treatment of any text parishioners know well (Christmas texts are among the most familiar.); that way your proclamation won't fall flat or become hackneyed.

12. Articulate deliberately the consonants at the ends of words – the d's and t's, for example, as in God (rather than Gaw). Sometimes the whole meaning rests on such words.
13. Learn to stress a phrase or word in various ways: a hushed voice often works better than a raised voice.
14. Rehearse several times any Bible passages with run-on sentences (typically in Paul's letters) or any text where the meaning is apt to be lost to listeners. Your task is to communicate meaning.
15. Consider yourself a "proclaimer of the word of God." It is the skills of a proclaimer that you will be developing and using, not those of an actor, radio announcer, or toastmaster.
16. Consider nonverbal communication. Let your body language and facial expressions help you express the message of the reading. Posture, gesture, and facial expression should complement your words.
17. Observe and learn from other proclaimers of the Word when you are not scheduled to proclaim.
18. Ask several people to give you honest feedback on your proclaiming skills. Use these constructive feedbacks to improve your skills.
18. Allow the Scriptures, more and more, to influence your daily life. This is the best part of being a proclaimer of the Word; the Scriptures begin to form you...

### **Before Mass**

1. Come directly to the Sacristy, and put a checkmark next to your name on the liturgical ministers schedule on the bulletin board.
2. Then take a moment, pause and say the prayer for Proclaimers of the Word.
3. Read the announcements (P.O.W.- A) or Universal Prayer (P.O.W. -B) which you will find on the sacristy counter.

4. Take a look at the Lectionary before Mass, noting your reading and how it looks different from the workbook. Make sure the ribbon is on the correct page for the first reading and placed on the ambo.
5. Check any pronunciations of words and names in the scriptures and prayers or announcements that you are unsure of with the priest.
6. If anxious, take a few deep, slow breaths to calm yourself.
8. P.O.W. -B, will be processing in with the Book of the Gospels. If you are doing it remain in the Sacristy.
7. Check with the priest to be sure there are no changes to the standard procedure because of special liturgies (Communion, Anniversaries, special blessings, etc.) or additional participants (priests, servers, speakers, etc.).

### **While Reading**

1. If you are reading the announcements (P.O.W. -A) **3 minutes before Mass**, approach the sanctuary, bow to the altar, ascend to the ambo and read the announcements. When you are done reading, descend from the sanctuary and go to your seat.
  1. P.O.W. – A, as Father sits after the opening prayer, walk up for the first reading.
  2. Approach the sanctuary, stand in front of the altar and bow. Then ascend to the ambo. Be reverent and take your time, but be natural at the same time, do not draw attention to yourself. If you are not 100% sure on your feet, **please use the railing to go up and down the stairs. If the people can have the slightest concern about your safety, your failure to use the railing will distract them and draw attention to you and away from the liturgy and God.**
  3. Make sure that your face can be seen over the ambo.
  4. **Begin by adjusting the microphone** to your height. If people cannot hear you all your hard work to prepare the reading will be for nothing.



5. Look out at the congregation for a second, moving your head to scan the entire horizontal space as you introduce the reading. This is a time-tested way to attract the congregation's attention and focus it on the Scripture.
6. Start with –A reading from the... (Do not say –The first/second reading is...) **Pause** and Finish with –The Word of the Lord, stand at the ambo for a moment of silence then descend from the sanctuary, wait for the cantor to join you, bow to the altar at the same time and then return to your seat.
7. P.O.W. – B, when the psalm concludes approach the sanctuary, stand in front of the altar, wait for the cantor to join you and bow at the same time. Then ascend to the ambo, and follow the procedures above to proclaim your reading. When you are done reading please close the Lectionary and place in the shelves within the ambo.
8. P.O.W. -B, if the Deacon is not present you will read the intentions of the Universal Prayer—after the Profession of Faith (Creed), go up to the ambo as explained above, after the priest's introduction read the response and intentions pausing each time for the congregation to respond. Be sure to include the final intercession, the intention of the Mass. Stay standing while Father reads the concluding prayer. Then return to sit in your pew in the manner explained above.

### **Tips for Proclamation**

1. Remember to project your voice so that the people in the last row of pews can clearly hear you. Microphones only amplify your voice. Use them effectively so that your voice is not inaudible or overwhelmingly loud.
2. Remember to pause between the end of the reading or intention and the closing words ("The Word of the Lord", "We pray to the Lord")
3. Speak slowly, clearly enunciating each word. Good proclamation requires more precise enunciation than ordinary conversation. Pause in appropriate places (refer to your workbook).
4. One rule of thumb: if you sound to yourself as if you are speaking too slowly, you are probably speaking at the right speed!

5. The ideal method is to make eye contact with parishioners in all areas of the Church. Eye contact should be made while speaking, not just during pauses. It will take practice to be comfortable with making eye contact while speaking. You may discretely use your finger to follow the reading if you are afraid of losing your place while making eye contact.

6. Remember to modulate your voice – its pitch and volume. Use variations to make the text clear to the assembly.

7. Use your judgment about phrasing. There should be a musicality to your speech as you move more quickly over the least important phrases to linger over the most important ones.

8. Address yourself, when proclaiming, as much as you do the assembly gathered to worship. This is an attitude the congregation will understand and appreciate.

9. Microphone usage: It is crucial to find just the right spot or zone that will enable you to maximize your volume without creating explosive or popping sounds. These distracting and unwelcome noises occur most often on "p" and "t" sounds and are created by speaking too closely to the head of the microphone. The rush of air that comes from your mouth on these consonants (and others as well) generates a strong force of air that is magnified unpleasantly through the sensitive head of the mike.

This can be easily avoided by positioning the microphone head a little above your mouth (nose level) or a little below (chin level) so the rush of air goes above or below the head. You can also stand just to the right or left of the head or stand a little back but not too far or your voice may fade out.

Chin level is preferred to nose level because the microphone may block the view of your face and facial expressions are an important component of proclaiming, but ultimately, you have to go with the mike position that best projects your voice.

10. Pausing, Silence is golden at least in the right spots, and the proper use of pausing is essential to effective proclaiming. This is the one tool that eludes many a lector.

Let's consider some obvious places to use the pause:

- to provide a segue when the reading is changing direction
- to allow listeners to absorb an important point
- to provide space between multiple thoughts in the same sentence
- to take a breath
- before and after quotes to offset the quote from the character or narrator
- after the announcement line "A Reading from."
- before the closing line, "The Word of the Lord"

Please keep in mind that pauses used too frequently within a sentence or paragraph will create a choppy effect. Strive for smoothness and fluidity. Pauses that interrupt a phrase or grouping of words in the wrong places can change the meaning or intended feeling. Pauses that are too long or too frequent can kill the pace of the reading and create drag.

#### 11. "The Word of the Lord"

The closing line is actually the most important line in every reading because it reminds us that God is speaking directly to us. He may be using a human voice but the words and the message are His. Take care with this line. Speak it loudly and clearly. Please do not hurry through it or mutter it as an afterthought. As with the announcement line, separate it from the body of the reading with a strong, healthy pause. three to four seconds. Look the assembly in the eye when you proclaim the ending; do not rush away. Give its significance time to sink in. After all, this message that you proclaimed is directly from God. It should leave them with a sense of awe.

#### 12. Action Words

When proclaiming, it should always be your goal to bring the Word to life. In order to do this, you should among other things, take advantage of action words. Action words have inherent life because people can generally envision the actions indicated. However, action words will remain dormant if you

gloss over them, mumble or rush past them. Let's give them the attention they deserve.

Some words may require increased energy or force, others gentility or quietness; some may be drawn out, others hastened. Remember, action words are verbs (but not all verbs are action words and not all verbs are worthy of emphasis). Try to find those words that will help paint a picture for your readers. Underline the key words and consider how you might emphasize them to help bring the passage to life. Be careful though not to overreach in your attempt to add color. Otherwise, you may appear theatrical or insincere and that would be distracting for the listener. Also, be selective in what you emphasize; if you choose everything to stress, the result is that nothing is stressed.

### 13. Listener Appreciation

Do not underestimate the congregation's appreciation of the lector who thoroughly and meticulously prepares his or her reading. They know that you have done this for them and they will be glad in their hearts though they may not actually tell you or thank you personally. The Lord knows, however, and He will smile down upon you

## **Terms Used**

**LECTIONARY:** (Latin-lectionarium=a reading) The liturgical book containing the biblical texts used in the Eucharist and in the Sacraments. The Lectionary is published in four volumes: **VOLUME I**—Contains the Sunday readings arranged according to the liturgical year from Advent to the Solemnity of Christ the King, in three cycles, A,B,C. Cycle A focuses on the Gospel of Matthew; Cycle B on Mark and Cycle C on Luke. The Gospel of John is read on the last three Sundays' of Lent, the Sundays of Easter, and from the 17th to the 21st Sundays of Ordinary time in Cycle B and on other important solemnities of the Church year. **VOLUME II**— Year I—Weekday readings arranged according to the liturgical year. Includes readings for Commons or readings for celebrations of Mary and the saints. **VOLUME III**—Year II—Weekday readings arranged according to the

liturgical year. Includes Commons for celebrations of Mary and the saints. VOLUME IV— RITUAL MASSES— readings for various rituals (weddings, baptisms, confirmation, funerals, etc) or for various occasions: for the Church, for civil needs, for various public needs, for particular needs.

AMBO: (Greek-ambōn=raised edge) or pulpit (Latin-pulpitum=wooden platform) or lectern (Latin-lectus=to read) is the place from which the Word of God is proclaimed and explained. The lector and priest should use it for all scripture readings, including the psalm whether recited or sung, and the Prayer of the Faithful.

## **Addendum 1. Example of Announcements and Universal Prayer**

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS (P.O.W. - A)**

#### **June 30 & July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 13th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

GOOD MORNING/EVENING! WE WELCOME ALL VISITORS AND PARISHIONERS TO SAINT ANTHONY/ HOLY CROSS/ ALL SAINTS PARISH,. TODAY WE CELEBRATE THE 13th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME.

\* Today is World Mission Sunday. On this day, we are called – as baptized Catholics – to celebrate and financially support local churches in Asia and Africa, the Pacific Islands, and parts of Latin America and Europe, an area that covers more than half the territory of the globe. Through the work and witness of mission priests, religious and lay leaders, the poor receive practical help and experience God’s love and mercy, His hope and peace. Please be as generous to this second collection as your means allow.

\* An information meeting for HELPING HANDS will be held on (tomorrow) Monday, October 23, at 7 PM in the parish Hall.

\* Our Readings today begin at #937 in the hymnal.

Gathering as one body in Christ, we invite you to stand and greet those around you.

### Universal Prayer (P.O.W. - B)

Presider: We bring our prayers to God, who hears the cry of the poor.

Lector: Our response to these petitions is “Lord, hear our prayer.”

That all members of the church respond wholeheartedly to the demands of Gospel living, we pray to the Lord...

That leaders of nations work diligently to overcome the divisions that bring harm and destruction to the world, we pray to the Lord...

For all who serve our nation and our local communities, particularly members of our military: that God will watch over them, preserve them from harm and bring them safely home, we pray to the Lord...

For all recovering from storms and wildfires: that God will give them strength, open a new vision for rebuilding their lives, and find the support and companionship which they need, we pray to the Lord...

For those who are ill, especially those on our bulletin prayer list, that they may be healed and made whole, we pray to the Lord...

For those who have requested our prayers, for those who have no one to pray for them, for the silent intentions that we hold in our hearts and for all of our faithfully departed, especially, and ...

(Sat.) 4:30 pm – Joseph Delforte ...

(Sun.) 8:30 am – Nicholas Valvano...

10:30 am – Flora Appleton ...

2:00 pm – Gioseppina Palermo ...

...for whom this Mass is being offered. We pray to the Lord...

Presider:

All-powerful God, everything we have comes from your hand.

We return it all to you, asking only your mercy.

Hear our prayer, we ask, through Christ our Lord.

## **Addendum 2. Praying with Scripture**

### Lectio Divina

1. Lectio Reading. What does the text say? What words speak to me?
2. Meditatio Meditation. How do these words remind me of Jesus Christ?
3. Oratio Prayer. What concrete aspect of my life is being challenged?
4. Contemplatio Contemplation. How am I moved?

### THE PROCESS of LECTIO DIVINA

A VERY ancient art, practiced at one time by all Christians, is the technique known as lectio divina - a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures which enables the Bible, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God. This ancient practice has been kept alive in the Christian monastic tradition, and is one of the precious treasures of Benedictine monastics and oblates. Together with the Liturgy and daily manual labor, time set aside in a special way for lectio divina enables us to discover in our daily life an underlying spiritual rhythm. Within this rhythm we discover an increasing ability to offer more of ourselves and our relationships to the Father, and to accept the embrace that God is continuously extending to us in the person of his Son Jesus Christ.

Lectio - READING/LISTENING THE art of lectio divina begins with cultivating the ability to listen deeply, to hear “with the ear of our hearts” as St. Benedict encourages us in the Prologue to the Rule. When we read the Scriptures we should try to imitate the prophet Elijah. We should allow ourselves to become women and men who are able to listen for the still, small voice of God (I Kings 19:12); the “faint murmuring sound” which is God’s word for us, God’s voice touching our hearts. This gentle listening is an “atunement” to the presence of God in that special part of God’s creation which is the Scriptures. The cry of the prophets to ancient Israel was the joy-filled command to “Listen!” “Sh’ma Israel: Hear, O Israel!” In lectio divina we, too, heed that command and turn to the

Scriptures, knowing that we must “hear” - listen - to the voice of God, which often speaks very softly. In order to hear someone speaking softly we must learn to be silent. We must learn to love silence. If we are constantly speaking or if we are surrounded with noise, we cannot hear gentle sounds. The practice of *lectio divina*, therefore, requires that we first quiet down in order to hear God’s word to us. This is the first step of *lectio divina*, appropriately called *lectio* - reading. The reading or listening which is the first step in *lectio divina* is very different from the speed reading which modern Christians apply to newspapers, books and even to the Bible. *Lectio* is reverential listening; listening both in a spirit of silence and of awe. We are listening for the still, small voice of God that will speak to us personally - not loudly, but intimately. In *lectio* we read slowly, attentively, gently listening to hear a word or phrase that is God’s word for us this day

*Meditatio* - MEDITATION ONCE we have found a word or a passage in the Scriptures which speaks to us in a personal way, we must take it in and “ruminate” on it. The image of the ruminant animal quietly chewing its cud was used in antiquity as a symbol of the Christian pondering the Word of God. Christians have always seen a scriptural invitation to *lectio divina* in the example of the Virgin Mary “pondering in her heart” what she saw and heard of Christ (Luke 2:19). For us today these images are a reminder that we must take in the word - that is, memorize it - and while gently repeating it to ourselves, allow it to interact with our thoughts, our hopes, our memories, our desires. This is the second step or stage in *lectio divina* - *meditatio*. Through *meditatio* we allow God’s word to become His word for us, a word that touches us and affects us at our deepest levels.

*Oratio* - PRAYER THE third step in *lectio divina* is *oratio* - prayer: prayer understood both as dialogue with God, that is, as loving conversation with the One who has invited us into His embrace; and as consecration, prayer as the priestly offering to God of parts of ourselves that we have not previously believed God wants. In this consecration prayer we allow the word that we have taken in and on which we are pondering to touch and change our deepest selves. Just as a priest consecrates the elements of



bread and wine at the Eucharist, God invites us in lectio divina to hold up our most difficult and pain-filled experiences to Him, and to gently recite over them the healing word or phrase He has given us in our lectio and meditatio. In this oratio, this consecration-prayer, we allow our real selves to be touched and changed by the word of God.

Contemplatio - CONTEMPLATION FINALLY , we simply rest in the presence of the One who has used His word as a means of inviting us to accept His transforming embrace. No one who has ever been in love needs to be reminded that there are moments in loving relationships when words are unnecessary. It is the same in our relationship with God. Wordless, quiet rest in the presence of the One Who loves us has a name in the Christian tradition - contemplatio, contemplation. Once again we practice silence, letting go of our own words; this time simply enjoying the experience of being in the presence of God.

#### THE UNDERLYING RHYTHM of LECTIO DIVINA

IF we are to practice lectio divina effectively, we must travel back in time to an understanding that today is in danger of being almost completely lost. In the Christian past the words action (or practice, from the Greek praktikos) and contemplation did not describe different kinds of Christians engaging (or not engaging) in different forms of prayer and apostolates. Practice and contemplation were understood as the two poles of our underlying, ongoing spiritual rhythm: a gentle oscillation back and forth between spiritual “activity” with regard to God and “receptivity.” Practice - spiritual activity - referred in ancient times to our active cooperation with God’s grace in rooting out vices and allowing the virtues to flourish. The direction of spiritual activity was not outward in the sense of an apostolate, but inward - down into the depths of the soul where the Spirit of God is constantly transforming us, refashioning us in God’s image. The active life is thus coming to see who we truly are and allowing ourselves to be remade into what God intends us to become. In contemplation we cease from interior spiritual doing and learn simply to be, that is to rest in the presence of our loving Father. Just as we constantly move back and forth in our exterior lives between speaking and

listening, between questioning and reflecting, so in our spiritual lives we must choose which text is chosen, as long as one has no set goal of “covering” a certain amount of text: the amount of text “covered” is in God’s hands, not yours. Place yourself in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent. Some Christians focus for a few moments on their breathing; others have a beloved “prayer word” or “prayer phrase” they gently recite in order to become interiorly silent. For some the practice known as “centering prayer” makes a good, brief introduction to lectio divina. Use whatever method is best for you and allow yourself to enjoy silence for a few moments. Then turn to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the “still, small voice” of a word or phrase that somehow says, “I am for you today.” Do not expect lightening or ecstasies. In lectio divina God is teaching us to listen to Him, to seek Him in silence. He does not reach out and grab us; rather, He softly, gently invites us ever more deeply into His presence. Next take the word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories and ideas. Do not be afraid of “distractions.” Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself which, when they rise up during lectio divina, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God. Then, speak to God. Whether you use words or ideas or images or all three is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. And give to Him what you have discovered in yourself during your experience of meditation. Experience yourself as the priest that you are. Experience God using the word or phrase that He has given you as a means of blessing, of transforming the ideas and memories, which your pondering on His word has awakened. Give to God what you have found within your heart. Finally, simply rest in God’s embrace. And when He invites you to return to your pondering of His word or to your inner dialogue with Him, do so. Learn to use words when words are helpful, and to let go of words when they no longer are necessary. Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you in both words and silence, in spiritual activity and inner receptivity.

Sometimes in lectio divina one will return several times to the printed text, either to savor the literary context of the word or phrase that God has given, or to seek a new word or phrase to ponder. At other times only a single word or phrase will fill the whole time set aside for lectio divina. It is not necessary to anxiously assess the quality of one's lectio divina as if one were "performing" or seeking some goal: lectio divina has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

CONCLUSION LECTIO DIVINA is an ancient spiritual art that is being rediscovered in our day. It is a way of allowing the Scriptures to become again what God intended that they should be - a means of uniting us to Himself. In lectio divina we discover our own underlying spiritual rhythm. We experience God in a gentle oscillation back and forth between spiritual activity and receptivity, in the movement from practice into contemplation and back again into spiritual practice. Lectio divina teaches us about the God who truly loves us. In lectio divina we dare to believe that our loving Father continues to extend His embrace to us today. And His embrace is real. In His word we experience ourselves as personally loved by God; as the recipients of a word which He gives uniquely to each of us whenever we turn to Him in the Scriptures. Finally, lectio divina teaches us about ourselves. In lectio divina we discover that there is no place in our hearts, no interior corner or closet that cannot be opened and offered to God. God teaches us in lectio divina what it means to be members of His royal priesthood - a people called to consecrate all of our memories, our hopes and our dreams to Christ.