



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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'Lectio divina': reading and praying with the Bible

On occasion Pope Francis directs his collaborators to distribute copies of the New Testament, free of charge, to people in St. Peter's Square.

His aim is that people, by reading the Gospel, will grow in knowledge, love, and service of Jesus, especially in worship and in ministry to the poor.

Towards that same end, I purchase and give out at Confirmation, without cost, Pocket Gospels, a collection of the four gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

Someone gave me a New Testament when I was in college, inviting me to read it. Though not terribly religious, I did read it, and kept it with me in the back pocket of my jeans.

It seemed like for the first time I was learning about Jesus, his teachings, deeds, and the way of life for his followers. I was attracted by that. My life was forever changed by Jesus.

There are different ways to "encounter" Jesus: the Blessed Sacrament; the assembly for Holy Mass; in the person of people in need. The Bible though has pride of place.

Scripture is given to reprove and correct us, to educate and train us in holiness. Consider how the Bible changed the lives of people like St. Augustine and St. Ignatius of Loyola.

I would recommend spending time praying with the Bible. This is called lectio divina, which is Latin for the divine (prayerful) reading of Sacred Scripture.

This way of praying involves four steps. The first is to read the Sacred Text, maybe one of the Gospels. Read it slowly, maybe more than once, listening for something that grabs you.

The second step is meditation, a fancy word for thinking about what you read. It is helpful to relate the passage to places, events or people in our personal lives.

The third step is prayer, talking to God about what was said in the passage. We don't have to say many or fancy words, maybe just please, thank you, I'm sorry, or I love you.

The fourth step is action, putting God's message into practice in daily life. Maybe we are inspired to pardon someone, or to serve another, or to say "yes" to a religious vocation.

To promote lectio divina, I have inserted in the Pocket Gospels a card with these four steps outlined (I also insert an examination of conscience to promote going to Confession).

If you don't have a Bible, get one, or at least a New Testament (or you can ask me for a copy of Pocket Gospels). And when you have one, read it, prayerfully.

But most importantly, establish and build up a personal relationship with Jesus, expressed in daily prayer, Sunday worship, and affecting the lives of others through mercy and service, or by giving them a Pocket Gospel.

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