



PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

LECTIO DIVINA

INTRODUCTION

◆ Background

Lectio Divina or Sacred Reading is an ancient tradition which came from the desert monks of fourth century North Africa and was then established in European monastic communities through St Benedict. Traditionally it involved a 'slow reading' of a chosen text from the Bible and allowing the words to speak in new ways.

◆ Summary of the Practice

Once you have selected a Bible passage and have taken some time to settle, there are four parts to a Lectio Divina exercise: Read, Reflect, Respond, Rest. These four movements may not always follow a linear progression. The aim is to move into the depths of silence and stillness where we can hear the Word spoken to us in love and respond to this Word with our love and our life. This is a gentle invitation into a movement from silence into the Word and back into silence, dwelling there in the presence of God.

◆ Ways to use the Practice

This is a practice that can be done on your own, as well as in a group with someone leading the practice. In a group setting, you might ask everyone to share the word or phrase that has stood out to them. If there are children in the group, encourage them to share first.

Children in particular might find it helpful to use crafts to draw or write the word or phrases of the passage that speak to them.

There are different variations of the practice, including Visio Divina (using icons, images, or objects). Dwelling in the Word, another variation of this practice, can be used in small groups or to start a PCC, Synod or other meetings. You can find an outline for Dwelling in the Word on www.wayoflife.london.

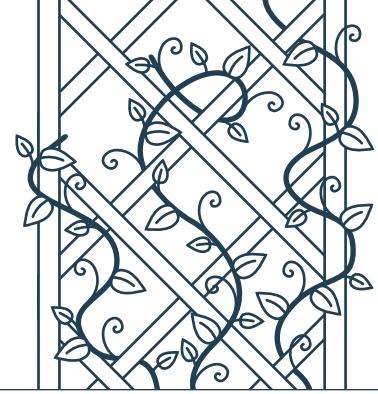
◆ Time

Lectio Divina is a listening practice, which ideally should not be rushed. If on your own, you could probably do the practice in about 10-15 minutes. For groups, we would suggest anything from 15-30 minutes.



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OUTLINE

1 Select

Choose your Bible passage. You could use the lectionary, or choose any passage that you would like to sit with for a while. *For our Prayer Practices for Lent online session, we will be using Matthew 20:29-34.*

2 Settle

Begin by taking some time to get comfortable. You might light a candle to be reminded of God's presence, or you might find it helpful to close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Continue breathing slowly, counting to three as you breathe 'in' and three as you breathe 'out'. Imagine breathing out any heavy or difficult feelings you might be carrying. Imagine breathing in God's deep love for you. Sit in the silence for a while.

3 Read

Read the passage slowly, a few times, with some generous silence in between each reading. Savour each word and phrase. Read the passage until there is a word or phrase that touches you, resonates, attracts or even disturbs you. If you find it helpful, you might want to write it down or draw it on a piece of paper.

4 Reflect

Ponder this word or phrase for a few minutes. Savour it, brood over it, let it sink in. You might notice thoughts, ideas, feelings, memories or images that are called to mind by the word or phrase. Listen for what the word or phrase is saying to you at this moment in your life, what it may be offering to you, what it may be demanding of you.

5 Respond

Speak to God from the quiet of your heart about the passage and the word or phrase that stood out to you. Whatever is in your heart to say, ask, repeat, wonder or complain about... Alternatively, you could write down the thoughts that have come your way.

6 Rest

Spend a moment resting in the quiet; knowing God has been with you in your praying and listening, hears your prayers and is with you now.

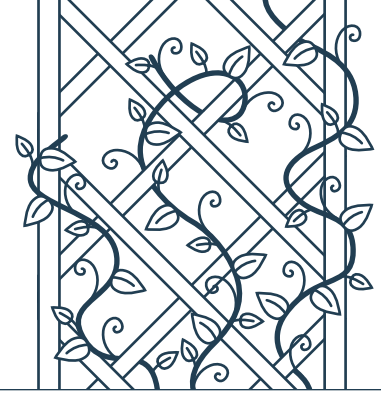
**Where it says God, you can replace this with Jesus or the Holy Spirit and vice versa.*





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◆ Questions for Reflection

- How did you respond to that short practice of Lectio Divina? What was helpful? What was not so helpful?
- How might you use and develop this practice in your everyday life?
- Are there any other helpful resources you use to read Scripture?
- How might this practice be used within your church community?

Note for when reflecting on these questions as a group:

The focus of this exercise is not on the content of people's prayer or what they have spoken about with God. What we are inviting you to do is reflect on the practice itself, how it is or might be useful to you and your church community and how you might practically build it into your life. If someone does share something personal about their experience of the practice, we encourage you to simply say 'thank you' and hold what was shared, possibly with a short moment of silence before moving on.

◆ Resources

Books

- *Lectio Divina: The Sacred Art, Transforming Words & Images Into Heart-Centered Prayer*, Christine Valters Painter (SPCK, 2021)
- *The Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, Rich Villodas (Waterbrook, 2020), page 37-41

Online (Apps and Websites)

- *Lectio 365, 24/7 Prayer*
<https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-365/>
- *Pray As You Go*, Jesuit Media Initiatives
<https://pray-as-you-go.org/series/16-how-to-pray-with-lectio-divina>

Visit <http://lent2023.wayoflife.london> for accompanying videos and other prayer practice resources.