

Adult Faith Template: *Lectio Divina*

(*divine reading or holy reading*)

Virtue Link: *Faith, Hope, Love*

Catholic Character Themes: *Discipleship, Reverence*

Lectio divina is prayerful reading of a sacred text, usually the scriptures. It is a means of encountering Christ in his living word and entering into a deeper understanding of the inspired scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is a pathway which can lead us to that simple gaze of the heart on God, which is *contemplative prayer*. *Lectio divina* is as old as Western monasticism itself. It can be done alone, or with a group where one person proclaims God's word and everyone else listens.

Before beginning, we ask the Holy Spirit who inspires God's living word to open our hearts and minds to its message. A leader can do this on behalf of the group. Following this, the word is proclaimed three or four times with 20 second pauses in between, following the process below:

***Lectio divina* has four moments**

Reading the text (*Lectio*)

Read the text (one from the Gospels is recommended) at a pace that you would like to have it proclaimed to you, then take 20 or 30 seconds and let God's word sink in.

Meditation (*Meditatio*)

Repeat the above process, resting at the end. You may find yourself returning to a word or phrase; let it take hold of your heart, and ask the Holy Spirit to *break it open* for you. You may enter a passage, as though it were happening in front of you; perhaps you find yourself part of it. Stay with the part of the text that is speaking to you, and allow it to carry your heart into prayer.

Mental Prayer (*Oratio*)

As the proclamation of God's word continues, your meditation may lead you to a question that becomes a prayer. It may be an awareness of personal need or longing. You may find yourself interceding for loved ones, for your community or for the world. You may be consumed by thankfulness, sorrow, wonder, grief or praise. Let these well up in your heart and entrust them to God.

Contemplation (*Contemplatio*)

As your mental prayer quiets down, allow your heart, the centre of your *self* to continue on where God's word has drawn you. Simply rest, and allow your heart to gaze on (and be gazed upon by) the word's sacred and inspiring Origin; rest in the Lord...

If *Lectio Divina* is done with a group, at the end of this exercise (5-10 minutes or longer), participants may be invited to share their reflections on the experience. Our shared insights into God's Word can lead us to a renewed appreciation for the unique gifts of the Spirit we bring to our communities, strengthening our faith in the process.

When you're ready, give thanks for what you've received (a prayer of thanksgiving by the group leader is appropriate here). You may at times feel you have gotten nowhere with the text; simply trust your encounter with the living word. The seeds God's word plants in your heart will break open at the right time, often when you least expect it.

"[The] primacy of holiness and prayer is inconceivable without a renewed *listening to the word of God*. It is especially necessary that listening to the word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid tradition of *lectio divina*, which draws from the biblical text the living word which questions, directs and shapes our lives."

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *At the Dawn of the New Millennium (Novo Millennio Ineunte)*, No. 39.

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path (Ps 119, v.105).