

As you are meditating, be attentive to what is going on inside your heart and mind. The Holy Spirit will move you interiorly, prompting you to a loving dialogue, to adoration, praise, silent awe, contrition, thanksgiving, petition or intercession. Respond to these promptings as they advance and change. Speak to the Lord honestly and confidently from the heart. If the movement of prayer ends, return to meditation. Prayer moves toward simplicity and on into contemplation.

4. Contemplation (Lt. *contemplatio*) – God may choose to grant the gift of infused prayer where the Holy Spirit prays in your spirit. In contemplation, “God slakes the thirst of your soul and feeds its hunger” (Guigo II the Carthusian, *The Ladder of Monks*). It is pure gift – not something we can produce by our own efforts. Moments of contemplation can be fleeting or prolonged, subtle or pronounced. They can go and come again, mingling with the flow of words, meditations, and prayers.

One may experience a state of inner harmony “where carnal motions are quieted and the flesh is not at odds with the spirit. The light of God’s presence shines through the soul *experientially*.” (*Lectio Divina*, p. 22). This may also be experienced as an ache of the heart, a deep longing for God, or the soul going out to meet the Lord. Contemplation is a transcendent experience of deep communion with the Lord, of being loved by God and loving Him in return.

If you experience this infusion of prayer, rest in it and enjoy it. Remain still and passive as God is passing by. Avoid doing violence to this experience by forcing meditation or mechanical prayer. You may express short aspirations of love and longing, if they come naturally.

C. CONCLUDING PRAYERS

1. Thanksgiving: Thank God for all He has done for you in this time of prayer. Even if it seemed dry and unproductive, God may be strengthening or purifying you. We can trust that “*all things work for the good for those who love Him*” (Rom. 8:28).

2. Petitions & Intercessions: Lift up to the Lord daily needs and concerns, for family, friends, parishioners, etc.

3. Self-offering: Give God permission to do with you as He wills & offer yourself to Him completely with confidence and courage. Surrender all your activities, relationships and plans to Him. End by renewing your consecration to Jesus through Mary.

(Compiled from various sources
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LECTIO DIVINA

A METHOD OF PERSONAL PRAYER

“Seek in *reading*
and you will find in *meditation*.

Knock in *prayer*
and it will be opened to you in *contemplation*.”

– St. John of the Cross

“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, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 39)

A. PREPARATION

1. Presence of God: Recall “with whom we are speaking, and who we ourselves are who dare to speak with so great a Lord” (St. Teresa of Avila). Spend a short time in praise and make an act of contrition or humility in order to recollect yourself for intimate conversation with God.

Confident in His loving attention, surrender all your distractions and concerns to the Lord and focus your attention and affections upon Him. “*Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you*” (1 Pet 5:7).

2. Petition for Time of Prayer: With the Saints and Prophets say: “*Speak Lord your servant is listening*” (1 Sam 3:10) “*Here I am Lord, I come to do Your will*” (Is 6:8).

“O Holy Spirit, I consecrate myself to You. Be Master of my whole heart, that I may love; of my mind, that I may be ever docile to your Truth and inspirations; of my tongue, that I may be your poet; of all my senses and faculties, that I may act or suffer in deliberate surrender to the Father’s will; of my affections and emotions, that I may choose only in accord with my true end; of my whole being - past present and future! Through Jesus and through Mary, reign in me powerfully and transform me by Your grace, that I may glorify God alone eternally.

All-Holy, Good, and Life-giving Spirit, my Advocate and Guide, make this time of prayer fruitful. Penetrate my mind with your truth and capture my heart. Speak to me, lead me, and strengthen me.”

B. LECTIO DIVINA

Selection of a Text: It is best to pray with the Scriptures (esp. the Gospels), but good devotional books may also be useful. We suggest several excellent books of meditation to start out with: *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a’ Kempis; *In Conversation with God* by Francis Fernandez (St. Escriva); *Divine Intimacy* by Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalene (old & new versions); *Golden Treatise on Mental Prayer* by St. Peter Alcantara; *The Spiritual Combat* by Lorenzo Scupoli.

1. Reading (Lt. *lectio*) is placing the Divine word on your lips, in order to focus upon it. Gently read a selection from the Bible. When a thought, line, or word stands out and captures your attention, stop there and dwell on that text, carefully repeating it over and over. It may be helpful to read aloud, proclaiming the word to your senses.

Lectio is very simple: a verbal focus on a biblical thought. It is like placing the Divine word as food in the mouth. This leads into the second step: meditation.

2. Meditation (Lt. *meditatio*) – “Once the word of God is on the lips and in the mouth, one begins to bite and chew it; ... to meditate means to ruminate, to chew the word, dwelling at leisure on a morsel to extract the meaning of the text.” (*Lectio Divina and the Practice of Teresian Prayer*, by Sam Anthony Morello, OCD, p. 21) Receive it as a word that God is speaking to you personally. Ponder the hidden lessons in the word of God in order to acquire the mind of Christ. Meditation is hearing the word that *lectio* (reading) is repeating.

“Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart and strengthen our will to follow Christ.” (CCC 2708)

“One does not work hard at this prayer, but simply keeps listening to the words being repeated, letting them suggest their own images, reflections, intuitive thoughts. [*What does it mean or imply? How does this relate to my life?*] The whole process ... is like reading a love letter over and over again. Every word is savored and every thought made one’s own. (Lovers even memorize their favorite passages!)” (*Lectio Divina*, pp. 21-22)

During meditation, God may impart His word to you in various ways:

1) **Logos** (Gk. ‘word, rational discourse’) - God immerses you in the text, penetrating your mind and heart with revelation and understanding.

“In this sense we should follow the *lectio divina*, listening to the Scriptures, to the thought of Christ, learning to think with Christ, thinking the thought of Christ, thus having the same feelings of Christ, being capable of giving Christ’s thought and feelings to others.” (Pope Benedict XVI, October 4, 2005)

2) **Rhema** (Gk. ‘saying, utterance, word’) - God speaks directly to you, your life and your particular circumstances. It is a “now word” for you.

Meditation should lead into prayer – it is a mistake to meditate without responding to God through prayer. “*The important thing is not to think much but to love much.*” – St. Teresa of Avila. Continue meditating and praying with the same text until it dries up. When the text has been exhausted, continue with reading until you are prompted by the Holy Spirit to stop again. At each distraction in meditation or prayer, simply return to reading the text, repeating it as needed in order to recollect ourselves. It may be helpful to write the text and the important points of your meditation and prayer in a journal, either during or at the end of your meditation.

3. Prayer (Lt. *oratio*) “The word of God moves from the lips [*lectio*] to the mind [*meditatio*], and now into the heart [*oratio*]... Prayer is the response of the heart to the word of God...” (*Lectio Divina*, p. 22). In prayer, ardently desire the grace of God presented in the meditation, pouring your heart out to God in petition, in affective conversation with sentiments of love, in resolutions to grow in the virtues of Christ, in heartfelt sorrow for your sins, in silent attention, or in a simple gaze of love.