



Conclude your *lectio divina* with a prayer of thanksgiving. If praying together with a group, you may want to invite the group to share with one another what they experienced during prayer: what words of Scripture stuck out to them or how they responded to God in prayer. People may not be comfortable sharing, and no one should be forced to contribute to the conversation.

Let [all the Christian Faithful] remember that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together; for “we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine saying.”

Dei Verbum, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Vatican II

A Prayer before reading Scripture

*O Lord Jesus Christ, open the eyes of my heart that I may hear your Word, and understand and do your will.
Do not hide your commandments from me, but open my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of your Law.
Speak to me the hidden and secret things of your wisdom.
On you I set my hope, O my God, that you shall enlighten my mind and understanding with the light of your knowledge; not only to cherish those things which are written, but to do them;
For you are the enlightenment of those who lie in darkness, and from you comes every good deed and every gift.
Amen.*

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Lectio Divina
How to Pray
with the Bible



It is one thing to study Sacred Scripture, it is quite another to pray with it. It can be easy to study the details of Scripture, learning names, dates, and historical or literary facts, without letting the Word of God affect your heart. The Word of God is “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12), so we must approach it with an openness that allows us to encounter Jesus Christ in the written words of Scripture.

The words of Sacred Scripture were not written to remain imprisoned on papyrus, parchment or paper, but to be received by a person who prays, making them blossom in his or her heart.

Pope Francis

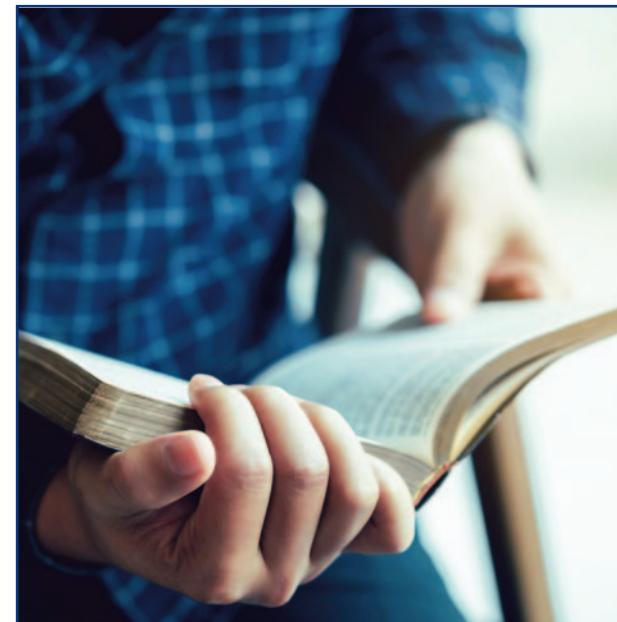
Lectio Divina (Latin for “Divine Reading”) is a prayerful approach to reading the Bible that Christians have used to pray with Scripture for centuries. It was developed in the monastic tradition, but, particularly after the Second Vatican Council, all Catholics have been encouraged to pray *lectio divina* “which is truly ‘capable of opening up to the faithful the treasures of God’s word, but also of bringing about an encounter with Christ, the living word of God.’”

Over the years, a simple outline for *lectio divina* has been adopted and it contains four key steps. *Lectio* can be prayed either individually or in a group setting with slight adaptations such as reading the passage out loud.

Begin by reminding yourself that you are in the presence of God. Sit in silence before God and remember that He is present with you. If it is helpful, focus on your breathing and allow distractions to pass out of your mind.

Ask the Holy Spirit to be present and to open your heart to the Word of God. Ask Mary, the Mother of the Word made flesh, to guide you to her Son who is made known to us in the Sacred Scriptures.

1. LECTIO [Reading] - Begin *Lectio Divina* with a slow, but natural, reading of the passage of Scripture that you are praying with. While you are attentively reading the passage, you should be asking yourself, “What does the biblical text say in itself?” After a few moments of silence, read the passage a second time and even a third time if desired.



2. MEDITATIO [Meditation] – During a period of silence, begin to ask yourself, “what does the biblical text say to me?” Is there a word or sentence that sticks out to you? Is God trying to say something directly to you as you are reading? It is important to remain faithful to the text itself and allow it to move and challenge you.

3. ORATIO [Prayer] – This is your response to God’s Word and to what was happening during the *meditatio* step previously. What do you have to say back to God? Words of petition, intercession, thanksgiving, praise? This too should be done in a period of silence with only limited guidance from a leader or facilitator if done in a group.

4. CONTEMPLATIO [Contemplation] – Allow God to show you his own vision and ask yourself, “What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?” Sit in silence and be open to how the Word of God can transform your life. Pope Francis describes this part of *lectio divina* by saying, “Words and thoughts here give way to love, as between lovers for whom sometimes it is enough to just look at each other in silence. The biblical text remains, but like a mirror, like an icon to be contemplated. And in this way, there is dialogue.” This period of prayer should be as long as needed for each individual.