

Praying with the Scriptures Lectio Divina - Divine Reading

The Scriptures guided Jesus' life. He would quote them to describe His mission, they would strengthen Him, and he would even pray Psalm 22 when He was dying. His example reveals the importance of praying with the Scriptures and allowing them to take hold of our lives.

St John Paul II wanted the whole Church to pray with the Scriptures using Lectio Divina because he believed in its power to transform individuals and the whole Church. The following explanation is taken from Young Adult CLC.org. "Lectio Divina is an ancient prayer method that is most literally known as "divine reading." It is meant to facilitate an encounter with God through an engaged reading of the Scriptures. In Lectio Divina, the scripture is meant to come more alive for a person as he or she pays attention to the phrases and words that they feel most drawn to sit with and reflect upon. This very act can allow for a greater attentiveness to God with the foundational faith that the Scriptures will speak to the most present reality, longings, concerns, joys, etc. of a person's life." This way of praying is based on the understanding that the Scriptures are alive because God is never separated from them and the Holy Spirit dwells in you.

A great place to start praying with the Scripture is the Lenten readings because they were designed to lead people to Christ. The weekday readings do not change from year to year and the Sunday Reading carry the same theme, even though they do change. You can find these Scripture references on a calendar handout in this packet. The following directions are based on the Benedictine and Trappist's understanding of Lectio Divina- Divine Reading.

The Process

Preparing to meet God: Open your bible to your selected passage. Take the Sacred text with reverence, acknowledging God's presence, and call upon the Holy Spirit.

Meeting God: Read your Bible passage in such a way that you are listening to God. Read out loud softly helps you listen better to Jesus. Begin to ponder a word or phrase, stay pondering until no more thoughts come to you. (Sometime every word speaks to you; sometimes nothing speaks to you. It doesn't matter because you are spending time with the God who loves you.) Then after you have responded to those thoughts, move from your head to your heart and just be with God in a loving relationship. At this point there are no thoughts or words, just be in the loving presence of God. Then return to your passage and continue reading. Remember you are trying to listen to the Lord Jesus speaking to you through the text and respond to Him, not get through the passage. Most importantly, let the Holy Spirit guide you.

Ending Your Prayer Time: At the end of the time, choose a word or phrase (perhaps one will have been given to you) to take with you, and thank the Lord for being with you and speaking to you. Throughout the day, each time you remember your word or phrase you are reconnecting to God.

The following ideas are based on this Scripture quote from the Gospel of Matthew and the book Ancient Paths: Discover Christian Formation the Benedictine Way by David Robinson (page 101). “When you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:6). First we must "go." Leave behind the ordinary duties and demands of daily life and remove our distractions in order to spend time in Scripture. This "going" involves moving into a new rhythm of life, by choosing a regular place, a non-drowsy time of the day, and a comfortable posture in which we can stay alert and attentive as we prepare to meet with God.

Second, we must “close the door.” This act creates an enclosure, or cloister, in which a person can enjoy unbroken time of intimacy with God. This act of closing the door includes removing interruptions, as well as creating a space that is conducive to personal time alone with God.

Third, we entered into personal time with God, who is unseen. Once we are seated in silence and solitude we open a text of Scripture and begin our time of black steel Divina – a discipline that is often been divided into four movements: reading, meditating, praying, and contemplating.

Remember: You can start anywhere on the circle. For example, if you had a crazy day you can start with responding/talking to Jesus about your day, trying to hear His voice or seeing His presence in your day and then go to your passage. Another way is just resting with God and then starting the passage. Depending on what is happening in your life, you might choose to start responding to life situation and then go to reading the Scriptures. You can start anywhere. Most importantly, let the Holy Spirit guide you.

