

## Learn to Pray Like the Saints!



“Lectio Divina” is a Latin Phrase that means: Divine Reading. This is a method of praying with the scripture that was developed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century and has been used ever since by many Saints and Doctors of the Church. You can really use Lectio Divina on other things like the Rosary or the Divine Mercy Chaplet, but it is really a process that is best used with the Scripture.

Prayer is a very important aspect of maintaining communication between God and you. Prayer can simply be defined as communication with the Divine persons of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, who themselves are in perfect communication, or communion with each other. Through prayer we enter that life of the Trinity, and learn how to give ourselves entirely to God. In effect, prayer teaches us to love, and how to accept that love from both God and even other people.

When a person prays it is the deepest of communication, as the things that one prays for reveals their inner heart, their burning desires, as well as important and motivating emotions such as fear, anger, joy, happiness, and most importantly love. The highest and most perfect prayer of the church is the celebration of the Eucharist (Mass), where we as a community enter perfectly into the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, that ultimate act of love. If we prepare ourselves for this banquet, we can more fully enter into it, and the communion that it brings. Therefore, these simple tips and guidelines for prayer will help to bring person closer to God through preparation for that Eucharistic feast, that very sharing in the life and love of Jesus present in the altar.

Lectio Divina has four parts, Reading, Meditation, Prayer, and Contemplation. I have broken those steps down for you below into smaller steps, but be assured, all of these steps are based in the Four parts that have been used in the church for hundreds of years!

Step One: The text

There are two ways that you can find scripture to meditate on. First, and simplest, use the Bible itself. I recommend the Gospels, as they are the direct experience of Christ Himself in the scriptures.

or

Simply use the internet and go to [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org), and click on the link that says “daily readings” near the top. This will bring you to a page that has a calendar on it. Click the date for the next Sunday coming up, and print out only the gospel passage for that Sunday.

#### Step Two: Invoking God. (1-2 minutes)

In this step you begin with the sign of the cross, and ask Jesus for the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is really the beginning of the prayer, and should be done with as much tranquility as possible. So shut off the radio, the TV and the dish washer. If you feel a candle or holy picture will help you to focus then use them!

#### Step Three: Reading the Word. (2-3 minutes)

Slowly and prayerfully read the words of the gospel out loud. Why read it out loud? It involves more of your senses and yourself. It helps you to dive more deeply into the words. You are not in any hurry, so take your time. Remember you are not only spending time with the Lord! Don't worry about the tough to pronounce words if they come up, but focus on the meaning of the gospel. My spiritual director in seminary who taught me *Lectio Divina* said that “less is more” when it comes to the scriptures. What this means is that it is OK to really focus on one verse or even one word of the scripture if it jumps out at you! If you use the daily mass readings, you will notice that they are usually pretty short (10-15 verses).

#### Step Four: Meditating on the passage. (5-10 minutes.)

Take a few minutes of silence to reflect on the words you have read. Anything can come out here, even work and family relationships and it may be the Holy Spirit guiding your meditation. God already knows your heart, he is just revealing it to you!

#### Step Five: Prayer (2-5 minutes)

This is the part where you get to react to the scripture you were meditating on. You can talk to God at this moment out loud, or take this time to journal, or simply to continue. Prayer is a conversation, so there is a part where God Speaks and you listen, and then there is a time when you speak and God listens. If you are just beginning in prayer, this may be difficult, but do try to say SOMETHING to God, even if it is a few words.

Understand that God Loves you, and give yourself permission to say what you are feeling or thinking at the time. If you are upset, be upset. If you are angry, be angry. If you are happy, enjoy it! God only loves you and he even loves you when you aren't in the best of moods. I find that the stuff that “comes out” here, is often more of a revelation to myself than it was to God, who already knew this stuff was going on inside of you.

#### Step Six: Silence and Contemplation. (5-10 minutes.)

After you are done talking to God in prayer, it is time for you to listen again. There should be a few minutes of silence between you and God. This is a time of just existing in the presence of God and to let things from your prayer to “sink in” a little. This is also the time to let God have his say in the conversation. He may not come in lightening bolts or gusts of wind, but he will come in the silence, and in the word. Let your eyes look to the words of the gospel text if it is necessary! Try to be as physically still and as passive as possible to God's word that has entered you.

#### Step Seven: Closing. (1-2 minutes.)

To close a formula type prayer like the Our Father, Glory Be or the Hail Mary would be appropriate. Don't forget to end with the sign of the cross! The "formula" prayers are a nice way to transition out of prayer. Take the peace with you into the world that you hopefully found in your prayer time.

The times above are merely suggestions, so spend as much or as little time as you need to in each section. Those suggestions are there to move you along the process. Each step of the process is important, so don't skip or rush through anything. Remember, "Be Still and Know that I am God!"

Remember to pray for Fr Wagner, too!