

What can I expect to happen in my life as a result of a regular diet of Lectio?

- * A deeper hunger for God
- * An increased awareness of God's presence
- * A more loving attitude towards others in my life
- * Healing in my inner self
- * A sense of who I really am before God
- * A sense of who God is for me
- * A sense that in all this God loves me as I am

A summary of the process of Lectio:

1. Prepare, relax, unwind
2. Choose your piece of scripture.
3. Read it slowly, one word at a time. Stop when you feel attracted to a word or a phrase.
4. Stay with the word or phrase. Say it over and over. Ask what it means for your life now.
5. Listen to God. Waste time with God.
6. How are you finding yourself with God? Stay with this for awhile, rest, struggle, cry, be as you feel you need to be at this time... stay there... What do you want to cry out or respond?
7. What action do you need to take as a response to this word or phrase in your life for the future?
8. Reflect on the experience... write about it... Thank God...

LECTIO DIVINA

Holy Reading of the Word

Rule of Benedict

48:4 But from the fourth hour until the time they recite Sext, they should be free for *lectio divina*.

48:10 From the first of October, however, until the beginning of Lent, they should be free for *lectio* until the end of the second hour.

One of the characteristics enabling Benedictine spirituality to withstand fifteen hundred years of history is that Benedict does not create a dichotomy between what is sacred and what is secular, between what is human and what is holy. For Benedict all of life is holy. This same notion he applies to prayer through the experience of *lectio divina*.

Holy Reading (*lectio divina*) is not so much about **what** we read but rather **how** we read the text of scripture. Benedict encourages us to bring our lives to the text of scripture, to let the scripture interact with what is going on in our lives and for our lives to gradually change course and move in the direction set by Christ and the Gospel. *Lectio divina* is a way into prayer, it is reading that is done as a basis for prayer, it is reading that has as its purpose, to seek God.

Essentially the process of *lectio divina* is reflective reading or reading done slowly and reflectively, reading done with the word interacting in one's heart, but it ensures unity of mind and heart.

The Process of Lectio Divina

First, I need to prepare. I need to take time to relax, unwind, to come away from what I have been doing previously. I need to choose in my heart to be here. **Hunger**—Why have I come—What is the desire, the longing, the hunger that I have in my heart for God at this time? So I need to be focused and to have a focus—light a candle, use incense, a flower, a cross, make the sign of the cross. Somehow, physically, I need to let myself know that I am about to commune with God. I bring my whole self, my life, my relationships, our world, to this moment.

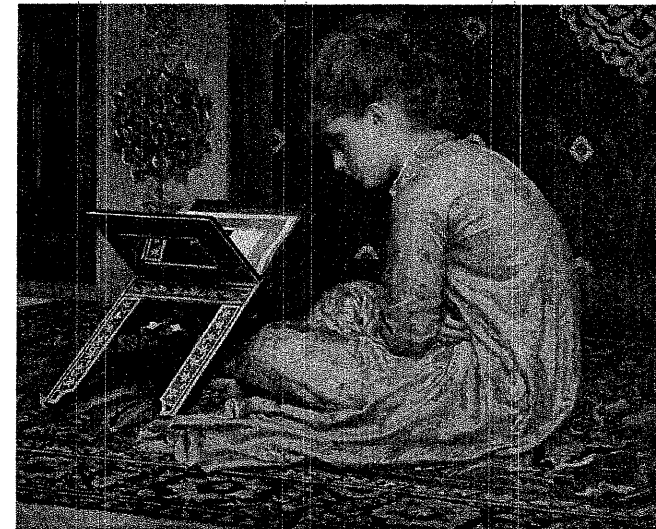
Second, I take up the scriptures (for those starting out, a gospel is good, or a psalm). I choose the reading of the day or I use the process of continuous reading, that is, I stay with the gospel or book of the scriptures that I have chosen until it is all read, (this could take a year or two with only a small morsel read each day). I eat a morsel at a time when I eat my meal, so too with the scriptures. I may also feel that I still have nourishment to gain from the scripture text that I prayed with yesterday, so it is good to keep returning until I feel that I have done with the piece before me.

Third, I commence the process of reading. I read aloud, or mouth the words, VERY S-L-O-W-L-Y, ONE - WORD - AT - A - TIME, because this is not reading for information but reflective reading. So I focus on a word or a phrase of scripture that strikes me, attracts me, and I take that piece or word and go over it, saying it, putting it into my heart. I let the words sink into my heart—feel them. What am I experiencing.

Fourth, I turn to God in my heart and ask God what this word might mean for my life, in my life, in my relationship with God? I send the words back and forth between myself and God. I ruminate them like

the cow, who contentedly chews her cud to gain all the nourishment she can from her previous meal. I chew on the word that has been given to me.

Fifth, I stop and listen to God. I listen with the ear of my heart. I waste time with God, that is, allow myself just to be with God. I let go, surrender, give over to God. God may choose to respond to me now or at a later time, often unexpectedly.



Sixth, I may find myself at one with God, securely held, at peace, deeply still and contented. Or I may find myself deeply challenged, upset, broken, agitated, restless. How do I respond?

Seventh, is there any action that flows from my response?

Eighth, I reflect on this time with God. I may want to journal, thank God, decide whether I need to stay further with this word or move on.