

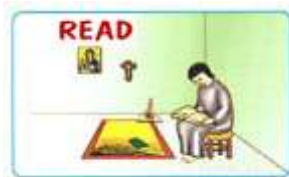
LECTIO DIVINA



By Pastor Jerry Truex

Lectio Divina (LEK-tsee-oh; di-VEEN-ah) is Latin for "sacred reading." It refers to the ancient practice of listening to God's voice through praying the Scriptures. Developed and practiced by the early monks, it is a traditional way to let Scripture penetrate the heart in such a way that a direct experience of God becomes possible.

Reading scripture prayerfully is the basic activity of *lectio divina*. It is in order to meet God. It is not for the sake of information, passing an exam, or professional skill. It is to know God for oneself in the reading and praying of scripture, seeking a first-hand experiential knowledge of God, not second-hand descriptive knowledge. *Lectio divina* has four movements:



LECTIO (READ). The first step is reading. It is listening to the Word. Select a passage of about 5 to 10 verses. Read it two or three times slowly and aloud. Each time ask yourself: What words or phrases stand out to you? What details catch your attention? Let the words flow without asking what they mean. That will come later.



MEDITATIO (MEDITATE). The second step is meditation. Read the passage again. Allow yourself to become adsorbed in the passage. Become so immersed that the words that it feels like you wrote them yourself. Vividly imagine the passage. If you are led, embellish the passage with your own details. Trust that God is guiding you. If it is a story, see yourself in participating in the scene. What do you see, hear, touch, smell, and feel? Who is in the story? What are they doing or saying?



ORATIO (PRAY). The third step is prayer. As you re-read the passage for a third time, allow your meditation to lead you into prayer. Allow your feelings to surface. Tell God how you feel about what you have read. Tell God what has struck you and what you think you should do about it. If your words are inadequate, try talking with God without words. You may feel energized, uplifted, and even euphoric. Or you may feel sad, angry, or pain. If so give them to God.



CONTEMPLATIO (CONTEMPLATE). The fourth step is contemplation. After talking to God in prayer, you may feel compelled to become quiet and listen to God. Here you quiet your mind and rest in God's presence. Place yourself wide open to whatever impressions God is giving you. Here you may feel a deep relaxation, a day-dream like absorption, even a sense of floating. Some feel an overwhelming sense of love, an oceanic sense of oneness with all that is.

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