

Prayer Exercise: *Lectio Divina*

This method of prayer is very much associated with the monastic tradition. It is a four stage process of reflecting on a particular passage of the Bible: Read, Reflect, Respond, Rest.

Lectio - Reading	Take a text of Scripture – most often from the Gospel, or the New Testament. It should be about 5 – 10 verses, ideally; but this is only a very rough guide. Read the text through, once normally and then once or twice more, slowly. Observe any words or phrases that stand out.
Meditatio – Meditate (Reflect)	This simply means to focus your mind on the text you have just read. Maybe you could pick a particular line that stands out and saying it over and over in your mind. Maybe you could think about what the text means, what is Jesus trying to say? Does it say anything to your situation? Maybe imagine Jesus in front of you...say these words to you. In the silence, let the text say something to you. Note how it makes you feel, what other things in your life it may be connecting with. Key: engage your mind on the text in any way which works for you
Oratio – Pray (Respond)	After meditating for a while, see if something emerges. Does it make you want to say something to God? Maybe it fills you with love for God; then say that. Maybe it makes you want to thank Him; then thank Him. Maybe it challenges you; then talk to Him about it. There is no right or wrong thing to say – be honest with God, say it as you see it. God can handle it.
Contemplatio – Contemplation (Rest in God’s presence)	After such a process of communicating with God, the soul needs to pause, sometimes for a short time, sometimes longer. This may come very naturally – otherwise just take a moment to be still; aware of what you found in the text, aware of what you might have just said to God, but not actively thinking about it. Once this passes, if you still have time left, feel free to go back to an earlier stage.

- This process is dynamic not rigid; you may find you need to go back and forth. This is a general guide. If you lose your train of prayer, don’t panic, just go back to an earlier stage and resume.
- If this is unfamiliar, don’t expect to ‘get it’ overnight. Monks and nuns spend a lifetime learning to pray. **In everything, be assured that God loves the fact you are trying to reach Him, and that is the essence of prayer.**
- Try this way of praying over the next week. Note down anything that seems to emerge and may be significant – you may want to reflect further on things which come up in prayer.
- Don’t suffer in silence. If you need to discuss any problems, get in touch with someone.

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Letter of St. Paul to the Romans 8.18-24)