

The Lectio Divina

The Latin phrase “lectio divina” may be translated as “divine reading.” It has been practiced in ancient monastic communities for millennia. The guiding principle is that the word is alive and is therefore generating new meaning each time it is encountered. It is ancient in origin is a good way to engage in active learning. Today it is often associated with the Benedictine practice, but it is also used in Bible study groups in churches in many denominations. It is definitely a way to become an active learner.

Here is how to pray *Lectio Divina*:

1. Read - Lectio

Read slowly a short passage of scripture. Any passage works for Lectio Divina. It should be short, and it should be read slowly. You might even read it twice and three times. As you read, let the words sink into your conscience. If you are struggling to choose a passage to read, read a portion of the daily lectionary or the passage assigned in the Forward Day by Day.

2. Meditate – Meditatio

The human mind quickly categorizes scripture and assigns meaning. The goal of this stage of the lectio is to strip away the analysis (setting, purpose, motive) and let your mind play with what God is saying in the scripture. This is often called pondering the living word by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your meditation toward illumination.

3. Contemplation – Contemplatio

In this movement of the Lectio, one takes the illumination of the meditation and applies it to a daily experience. This is the big step because it requires a deep understanding of the human condition and an awareness of our place in a large and complex graciousness under God.

4. Prayer – Oratio

The last movement is to pray. Prayer is putting the contemplation into a personal response. Prayer is a conversation with God that consumes all that you have discerned in the previous movements in hopes that it just might be transformative (with the help of God).

Reading the Bible

The Bible is the sacred scripture of the Christian Church. Reading the Bible is a practice that will lead to deeper learning. It would not be a good idea to pick up the Bible and turn to page one like you would most books. The Bible is a collection of books (the word “Bible” means “books”), so a strategic pursuit to read its entirety is necessary.

One recommended method is the **Bible Challenge**. St. Patrick’s followed this reading list several years ago. We have used the Bible Challenge at St. Patrick’s. It requires reading 30-40 minutes per day, 6 days a week for an entire year to read the entire Bible. There are resources found at forwardmovement.org (search for Bible Challenge) with commentary for each day of the challenge. There are also shorter challenges like reading a gospel over 50 days. Following a strategy will help you be successful in reaching your goals. It is even better if you find a partner to help you maintain your discipline.

Another way to read most of the Bible is to follow the **daily lectionary readings** found in the Book of Common Prayer (BCP 934), online (dailylectio.net), or through a phone app (search for daily lectionary). Any of these resources will provide a two-year lectionary of biblical readings for every day.

The Bible is a complex compilation, so it is often more meaningful to learn through reading reflections of people who spend their life studying the Bible and its ramifications for our life in Christ. Here are some options:

The **Forward Day by Day** is available for pickup every three months at St. Patrick’s and is also available online (prayer.forwardmovement.org). Each day, a short scripture passage is followed by a reflection written by guest contributors. Forward Day by Day was an effort to reinvigorate the life of the Episcopal Church in 1934.

Society of St. John the Evangelist, an Episcopal monastic community in Massachusetts, provides Brother, Give Us a Word, a daily e-reflection. It is literally a word with a short one to two sentence reflection. You can sign up to receive it on their website (ssje.org).

Richard Rohr is a catholic priest and contemplative who runs a spiritual center in New Mexico. He is also a prolific writer and retreat leader. He provides a reflection on faith and life in a daily e-newsletter. You can sign up to receive it on his website (cac.org).

If you have a specific interest, check with the clergy. They might be able to suggest resources that will help you deepen your learning.