



Praying with Lectio Divina

Listen for the word or phrase

Lectio Divina is an ancient form of prayer– it was crystallised during the Middle Ages in the monasteries. At that time there were very few Bibles and few people even among the monks were able to read. So one monk would take the chosen reading for the day and read it aloud to a gathering of the others. He would read the same reading over and over again and those listening would listen– waiting for the particular word or phrase that it seemed God was saying to them that day. Classically Lectio has four movements:

When an individual heard his ‘word’ or phrase, he would get up and leave and go to his cell. There he would think about– would savour the word or phrase reflecting on its significance for himself. Then he would talk to God, and listen as the Lord responded in his heart about what was stirred up by the text.

Finally he would spend some time in silent adoration.

Praying Lectio Today:

We believe that scripture is as alive for us today as it was when it was written. In praying Lectio Divina we are listening for the particular thing that God is trying to say to us through the scripture now! It is not a head exercise about what is the meaning of the whole text but rather the illumination through a line of something that applies now to me and my life.

Then I sit and mull over what God may be saying– I may enter into a dialogue with the Lord. One way of thinking about this dialogue is to understand it as speaking heart to heart with God.

Finally I sit and contemplate God looking at me as I gaze back at God.

Different Ways of Doing Lectio Divina

There are a variety of different ways of praying Lectio Divina.

In the Ignatian Tradition we start from the stance that this is what God is directly saying to me at the moment and allow the Lord to speak to our heart, as we enter into a dialogue with God.

In Centring Prayer we may use the word as a mantra, helping us to stay in the silence.

Some people find it helpful to write or draw as they mull over their word or phrase.

What do I do if I come to the end of thinking about my word or phrase before the time for prayer is over?

This is not an uncommon experience. Many people find that they have savoured what God was saying in a particular part of the passage and yet their prayer time is not yet over. If this happens just go back to the text and choose another word or phrase– something else that draws your attention and again reflect on that. In this way one may pray with most of the suggested passage; or one may spend the entire time on just one word. For each of us this will be different. Remember there is no right or wrong way to go about doing this!