



## Monastic Form of Lectio Divina

The monastic form of *Lectio Divina* is an ancient method that was practiced by the Mothers and Fathers of the Desert and later in monasteries both East and West. The monastic way is unstructured. One listens to the word of God in a particular passage chosen for the occasion and then one follows the attraction of the Spirit. This method can also be prayed in a group.

### Guidelines for Monastic Lectio Divina

**Moment One: (Lectio) Read** the Scripture passage for the first time. Listen with the "ear of your heart." What phrase, sentence or even one word stands out to you? Begin to repeat that phrase, sentence or one word over and over, allowing it to settle deeply in your heart. Simply return to the repetition of the phrase, sentence or one word, savoring it in your heart.

**Moment Two: (Meditatio) Reflect**, relish the words. Let them resound in your heart. Let an attitude of quiet receptiveness permeate the prayer time. Be attentive to what speaks to your heart.

**Moment Three: (Oratio) Respond** spontaneously as you continue to listen to a phrase, sentence or word. A prayer of praise, thanksgiving or petition may arise. Offer that prayer, and then return to repeating the word in your heart.

**Moment Four: (Contemplatio) Rest** in God. Simply "be with" God's presence as you open yourself to a deeper hearing of the Word of God. If you feel drawn back to the scriptures, follow the lead of the Spirit.

## The Method of Lectio Divina

*Lectio Divina* is the most traditional way of cultivating friendship with Christ. It is a way of listening to the texts of scripture as if we were in conversation with Christ and He was suggesting the topics of conversation. It is listening with the "ear" of the heart. The daily encounter with Christ and reflection on His Word leads beyond mere acquaintanceship to an attitude of friendship, trust and love. *Lectio Divina* leads us to communion or as Gregory the Great (6th c.), summarizing the Christian contemplative tradition says, "resting in God."

### Growing in Relationship

**Growing in relationship** with God is a process like any other **relationship**. We need to begin by listening and entering into dialogue with God's word. As the dialogue unfolds we will discover different ways of being in **relationship**; different moments of being with God.

There are the moments of listening to the other and pondering the meaning of his/her words. There are the moments of responding and dialoguing, as well as being with the other when no words need to be said.

A **relationship** with God is also made up of many moments. These moments may come in any order.

Begin by walking through each moment, taking as much time as needed. There are no "shoulds, oughts or musts." Listen with the ear of your heart and let the dialogue with God unfold in its own time and let the Holy Spirit take the lead.

We need to trust that God is eager to be with us and to share with us the inner peace and freedom we desire.

## Scholastic Form of Lectio Divina

This way of practicing *Lectio Divina* developed in the Middle Ages at the beginning of the Scholastic Period. At this time, there began a tendency to compartmentalize the spiritual life. As this tendency grew, the emphasis was placed more upon rational analysis and less on personal experience. The scholastic form divides the process into stages or steps in a hierarchical pattern. The scholastic method is a good way to learn *Lectio Divina* whether privately or in a group.

### Guidelines for Scholastic Lectio Divina

**Step One:** Read the passage, encouraging everyone to listen with the "ear of their heart." What phrase, sentence or even one word stands out to you?

**Step Two:** Read the passage again and **Reflect** on the word of God. Encourage everyone to be aware of what touches them, a thought or reflection that is meaningful. Allow a minute or two of silence.

**Step Three:** Read the passage again and **Respond** spontaneously to the word of God. Be aware of any prayer that rises up within that expresses the experience. Allow a minute or two of silence.

**Step Four:** Read the passage a final time and **Rest** in the word, reflect or pray and allow God to speak in the silence. Allow three or four minutes of silence.

**To Extend the Practice:** After the resting, take the phrase, sentence, or word into your daily activity and listen to it, reflect on it, pray over it, and rest in it as time allows during the day. Allow it to become part of you.