

## Introduction to *Lectio Divina*: “divine reading”; “tasting the Divine Word”

**Dn. Joe Michalak**, based on Benedictine tradition; Ben XVI *Verbum Domini*, nn. 86-87; CCC 2650-2659, 1177...

**A simple description of *lectio divina* (sacred reading): Spend at least 15 minutes during which you begin by reading the Scripture and progress through these aspects:**

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|-------------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------|
| • <i>Lectio</i> :       | What does God’s Word say?                              | = attentive reading       | Read          |
| • <i>Meditatio</i> :    | What is God’s Word saying to me now?                   | = receptive listening     | Ponder        |
| • <i>Oratio</i> :       | What does God’s Word bring me to say to Him now?       | = heart-to-heart speaking | Pray; speak   |
| • <i>Contemplatio</i> : | Simply gazing upon, Loving, Being with <b>The Word</b> | = silent resting          | Gaze; be with |

**The Aim of *lectio divina*: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”** (Paul to Colossians, 3:16)

Not “to have read” the words, but to *read* the Word, to encounter the Living Word, to become present from the center of our being—our *heart*—to the One Who Is already present to us—and thereby to be transformed “in the inner man.” To realize “the marvelous exchange.” ***Our Spouse speaking to us!***

**Prepare: “When you pray, go into your storeroom [of heart], shut the door [to anything else]...”** (Matt 6:6)

- Sit or kneel in a place of silence, without distraction. Before Blessed Sacrament is great!
- Make the Sign of the Cross, the sign of our salvation and of the One to Whom we belong.
- “Come Holy Spirit.” “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” “Be it done to me according to your word.”

“We read...”

**Step One: *Lectio (reading): What does God’s Word say? Exterior exercise* **SEEK****

Select a brief passage from the Scripture (another text may be used, but Scripture is the preferred place to start): a psalm, a Gospel passage, one of today’s readings, a short reading from the Liturgy of the Hours, a section of one of the prophets or New Testament letters....

**Read it slowly. Pause.** Read it again. Pause. Read it again. What does it seem to say? Is there anything unclear? *Any sentence, line, word jump out today? Where does my heart rest?*

under the eye of God...

**Step Two: *Meditatio (meditation): What is God’s Word saying to me now? FIND***

Chew over, mull over that sentence, line, word that sticks with me. Linger with it. Ponder it. What does God seem to be *saying to me now* through this Word? Does it stir me to know my sin, to be grateful, to know His love, His mercy, His greatness, His understanding, His truth, His Presence, to know I am loved, to know ...?

until the heart is touched

**Step Three: *Oratio (prayer): What does God’s Word bring me to say to Him now? KNOCK***

Based on my meditation and on what God seems to be saying to me now, what am I brought to say or stirred to respond to Him? Praise, repentance, gratitude, wonder, awe, holy fear, trust, cry of heart to know and be known, longing, sorrow...? *What shall I say to Him?*

...and leaps into flame”

**Step Four: *Contemplatio (contemplation): Entering the Mystery DOOR WILL BE OPENED***  
Simply gaze upon, Love, *Be with* The Word. Silence. Awe. Drink deeply of the wellspring of His Life. Rest.

**A Fifth Step: *Actio (action): The Word becomes flesh in my life as virtue, decision, act, service.***

Is there any resolution, action, decision, concrete response of follow through I am to make? Any service I am to undertake? Any act of charity (love) for God or others I am to do?

- Express gratitude, express love for Love, express desire to return to the Well...

**Mary:** “She kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.” Luke 2:19, 51

**Remember:** the aim is not to do academic Scripture study (though *lectio divina* may accompany such study), nor is it to “cover a lot of material” (as is the case with *lectio continua*). You may find that you return day after day to the same text or word. The liturgy (Mass) is perhaps the most fruitful source of the Word; the liturgy ensures we think and pray with the Church. *Lectio* naturally leads back to the Mass and to service to others. And the steps of *lectio* tend to blend and flow back & forth: it is a “wrestling with” the Word (as did Jacob with the angel); **the Word deals with us. Read Letter to Hebrews 4:12-13.**