

## Lectio Divina

*Lectio divina* means “divine reading” or “sacred reading,” and is usually done with specific Scripture passages, although one may also practice it with other kinds of spiritual books. At its root, “*lectio divina* is a form of reading that leads to prayer.”<sup>1</sup>

The four traditional steps of *lectio divina* are called *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*. They each represent distinct movements during the spiritual reading practice, but they also tend to flow into one another.

1. *Lectio* (reading) – The process begins with reading the Scripture passage, either aloud or slowly to yourself, and listening for what captures your attention. You may want to repeat the words and phrases that seem most important to you. Sometimes doing this will lead you to form a mental image of the story you are reading, and that can also open up new insights and questions.
2. *Meditatio* (reflection) – This step involves prayerfully meditating on the Scripture passage you have read, and reflecting on any thoughts, desires, or feelings that stir in you (both positive and negative). What might God be saying to you through the text?
3. *Oratio* (prayer/response) – At this point, reflection becomes prayer as you speak to God, talking with God about what God is saying to you in this moment. The idea here is to leave formal thinking aside, and instead allow your heart simply to speak to God in the stillness.
4. *Contemplatio* (contemplation/rest) – In this final step of *lectio divina*, you are invited to let go of all words and thoughts and simply rest in the presence of God. On its website, the Order of Carmelites describes *contemplatio* this way: “We listen at the deepest level of our being to God who speaks within us with a still small voice. As we listen, we are gradually transformed from within.”<sup>2</sup> Being still and silent, resting in God’s presence, and experiencing transformation in this way completes the cycle of *lectio divina* and prepares us to face the challenges of daily living with hope and peace.

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<sup>1</sup> Robin Maas and Gabriel O’Donnell, O.P., eds. *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 47.

<sup>2</sup> Order of Carmelites, “What is Lectio Divina?” <http://ocarm.org/en/content/lectio/what-lectio-divina> (accessed September 6, 2013).

**“Just Say the Word”**  
**Lectio Divina Guide – Matthew 8:5-13**

**Guidelines:** Protect confidentiality and follow the leader’s prompts.

**Sharing in Pairs:** This is not a time for extended conversation. Instead, share your reflections in no more than 2 to 3 sentences, then sit in silence until the room is silent.

**Matthew 8:5-13**, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

**Jesus Heals a Centurion’s Servant**

<sup>5</sup> When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him <sup>6</sup> and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress.” <sup>7</sup> And he said to him, “I will come and cure him.” <sup>8</sup> The centurion answered, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>9</sup> For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and the slave does it.” <sup>10</sup> When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, “Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. <sup>11</sup> I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, <sup>12</sup> while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” <sup>13</sup> And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you according to your faith.” And the servant was healed in that hour.

1. The first time the Gospel is read, silently name a word or phrase that caught your attention. When the leader prompts you, share your word or phrase with your partner (please share only the word or phrase – do not elaborate, explain, or teach.)

2. The second time the Gospel is read, silently name or write down where this passage touches your life today. When the leader prompts you, share your reflections with your partner. (**Remember:** Share only 2-3 sentences, then sit in silence until the room is silent.)

3. The third time the Gospel is read, silently reflect or write in response to this question: From what I have heard and shared, what does God want me to do or be this week? How does God invite me to change? When the leader prompts you, share your reflections with your partner. (**Remember:** Share only 2-3 sentences, then sit in silence until the room is silent.)

4. When the leader prompts you, spend a moment in silent prayer for your partner. Pray for him or her to have the wisdom and courage to follow through on their response to this word.