

Christian Prayer 4

Lectio divina

What is Lectio divina?

It is, simply, a meditative way of reading and praying with Scripture. It can be practised by an individual, praying alone, or used by a group praying together.

There are many variants of the prayer. This sheet gives details of just two of them, one for individual prayer, and one pattern for *lectio divina* in a group.

The structure

When engaging in *lectio* it is useful to make use of the structure given on the sheet *Christian Prayer III, Structuring Prayer*.

The same basic structure would be used by an individual or by people praying together as a group.

◦ Gather

- A formal beginning to the prayer – for example making the Sign of the Cross and/or using the following invocations and prayer, which are used in the Church's Daily Prayer. (An individual praying alone would say all the words; in a group the Leader would say the first lines and others respond with the second line.)

O God, come to our aid.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

◦ Word

- **An individual praying alone** would read the chosen scripture to themselves, generally silently.
- **A group praying together** would listen to the scripture read to them. It is encouraged for people to listen rather than to read the words at the same time. This allows the word to be received aurally, which is often more effective. (However this is not a hard and fast rule! Participants may have the text in their Bibles, open, or on printed sheets, or PowerPoint.)
- In either case the reading will generally be read more than once so that people may become more familiar with the text, or have the chance to respond to different parts of the reading during the time of prayer. (A worked out pattern for reading/re-reading with a group of people is given overleaf.)

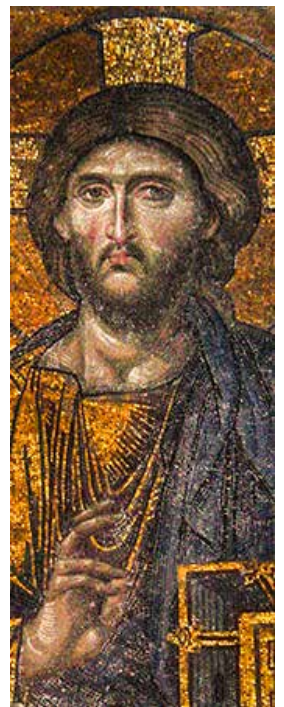
◦ Symbolic Action

- **A individual praying alone** would quietly meditate on the passage, especially on what in particular has struck them, bringing their thoughts and feelings to prayerful conversation with Jesus, with God.
- **A group praying together** would do likewise, but there is also commonly the opportunity for group members to share their responses with each other (see overleaf.)

◦ Sending Forth

- In all cases the prayer can come to a simple conclusion, for example by praying the *Glory Be*, and making the Sign of the Cross.

PTO



Lectio with a Group

GATHER

- Sometimes it can be suitable to have an opening song, which either focuses on the nature and dignity of Scripture, or that is chosen because it picks up a theme of the day or season, or the reading.
- Otherwise begin with the Sign of the Cross, and the following prayers.

O God, come to our aid.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

WORD

- Someone will then read the scripture passage. Invite everyone first to listen to the reader rather than read the words.
- In the silence that follows (about five minutes), everyone is invited to listen to the words they have heard echo in their heart and mind. People might like to hold on to any particular word, phrase or insight that struck them in the passage; or to re-read the text to themselves. Observing silence, everyone is free to do whatever seems right for them.

SYMBOLIC ACTION

- **After the five minutes ★ for personal private prayer and reflection**, participants are invited to share just a word, or phrase or sentence that has struck them. This is not a time for comments, discussion or explanation – just to speak out a word, or phrase or sentence that has struck us.
- The group has the chance simply to hear the word as it has echoed in its members. Sometimes everyone will have something to share, sometimes no-one will.
- When it is clear everyone who wishes to share has done so, the passage of scripture is read again (preferably by a different reader this time).
- After the second reading the group keeps silence together again, those present using the silence as they choose...
- After five minutes invite people to share their thoughts and responses to the passage of scripture. It is best to avoid this being a time for discussion. It is intended to be instead simply a time to respectfully listen to how each person has responded to the word of God – should they choose to share their response. ★ ★

SENDING FORTH

- When the shared listening ends, or the time for the prayer has run out, bring the prayer time to a close by saying together the Lord's Prayer (Our Father...) or the Glory be, and a dismissal such as: 'Let us continue our day in the peace of Christ.'

★ The length of time of silences can of course be set by the leader. For the very first sessions five minutes might be too long and feel uncomfortable for participants. However time for silent reflection is an integral part of this way of prayer - and about five minutes is something to aim at fairly soon after introducing this method of prayer. As students become more proficient and used to its fruitfulness the time of silence might even be extended further.

★ ★ It will be helpful to establish ground rules for confidentiality about people's sharing. It may be that a student shares something personal to them, that seems safe in the context of the prayer time, but that they would not wish discussed etc outside of the group time.