



Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina — defined as Divine Reading or Holy Reading — is a practice of contemplative scripture reading that can be traced back to Origen of Alexandria, an early Christian theologian. The practice was formalized under St. Benedict as the monastic movement gained hold in the 6th century.

Although the more formal practice of Lectio Divina continues within monastic life, the practice is also widely used by lay individuals and organizations in a variety of forms and settings.

There are four traditional stages of this prayer form, plus two additional stages that are considered by some to be the fruits or natural outcomes of Lectio Divina. Here is a brief explanation of each of the stages.

Traditional Stages

Stage 1: Lectio

Lectio is the practice of slowly reading a scripture passage, bringing your full attention and awareness.

Stage 2: Meditatio

In the meditation stage, we consider what the scripture passage says to us, or what meaning it offers for our individual lives.

Stage 3: Oratio

We are next drawn into prayer, where we engage in an intimate conversation with God, responding to God with open-hearted and frank entreaties, questions or gratitude.

Stage 4: Contemplatio

And finally, we sit in stillness with God. This stage is characterized by an openness, where we seek to make changes in our lives or seek to become more aware of God's grace and leading.

The Fruits of Lectio

Stage 5: Incarnatio or Actio

Lectio Divina invites action where we take what we have gathered in the process into our daily lives, as Pope Francis advises, to “give it concrete expression in charity and service of others.”

Stage 6: Transformatio

In other traditions, the fruit of Lectio Divina is seen as a transformative experience. The transformation we seek in this process is to become more like Christ in our everyday lives, or as St. Paul says, “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.”

The Practice

Lectio Divina can be practiced in groups, where the stages are more formally timed, or in private where an individual can be drawn by the Holy Spirit through the various stages of the process.

There are also a variety of sources practitioners rely on, including scripture, sacred text, poetry, chant, music, nature, art images or icons.

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Reflective Prayer at Centering Space

Each Tuesday and Wednesday at Centering Space, we host an hour-long centering prayer that contains some of the contemplative elements of Lectio Divina. We also offer programs in Advent and Lent that follow this form as well. Please check our website calendar for upcoming programs and registration information.