

Praying Daily with Scripture
LECTIO DIVINA—(Divine reading)

1. **Lectio (Read):** Slowly read the Scripture passage out loud, if possible, simply to become familiar with it. Use a reading from daily Mass or any other selection from the Bible (10-15 verses).

2. **Meditatio (Meditate/Reflect):** Silently read the passage again. Ask the Lord to let you read and “hear” it as if for the first time. What does it mean? Using your own words, tell this story in no more than 5 or 6 sentences.

3. **Oratio (Speak/Spontaneous Prayer):** Use your five senses to enter into the scene. Sight and sound come more natural, however, try to also imagine what the scene felt like (air temperature, ground under your feet, etc.) and what it smelled like and even what it tasted like (perhaps the dry, dusty air on your lips).
 - A. Pick one person from the passage (either a central character, even Jesus, or maybe a random member of the crowd).
 - B. Imagine you are there, in this person’s “shoes.” What do you see, hear, smell, taste or touch?
 - C. If the passage does not specifically name persons, simply see if the words themselves evoke any particular feeling or response in you. Does a particular word or phrase or image resonate? How do you think this person would feel or how would you feel in this situation?
 - D. Does this passage remind you of something or someone in your life? Is there anything you would say or do differently in this situation, either as the person in the Scripture passage or in the life-experience that this situation brings to mind?
 - E. **Have a “heart-to-Heart” talk with Jesus**, sharing your honest feelings about anything that has come to mind as you reflect on this passage. It might be something that is weighing heavily on your heart, or something that moves you to a deep sense of gratitude and joyful praise. **Choose one word or phrase from this passage that has a special meaning for you: _____.**

4. **Contemplatio (Rest in God; Contemplate):** Read the passage again. Close your eyes and picture Jesus. LISTEN to HIM. Pause in silence before God. Spend this time in simple silence, waiting and quietly listening for whatever the Lord might “whisper” in your heart.

LEADER’S/TEACHER’S INSTRUCTION SHEET
Directions to accompany the use of *Lectio Divina* handout:
"Praying with Scripture"

INTRODUCTION:

“Praying with Scripture” is intended for all ages.

This handout is effective in the classroom, home school settings, and small groups – or for individual use. Families have effectively incorporated this Scriptural progression, leading to prayer, into their devotional time together. It provides an opportunity for participation by all members. Parents and/or children can take turns reading the passage aloud, followed by telling the story in their own words. Even “little ones” and pre-readers can “pick a favorite person” in the passage – following the steps and answering the questions posed in Step 3. The steps described can seem almost too simplistic—most people are surprised at how the Holy Spirit uses this manner of prayer so powerfully. Don't skip any steps!

SELECTING THE SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:

It is best to begin using narrative passages with people (i.e. the Visitation, the Finding in the Temple). This facilitates the student’s immersion in the Scriptural passage through a specific person, and this personally related identification allows him/her to be more readily open to the truth God desires to reveal. It’s easier, initially, to identify with Elizabeth, the centurion, or a shepherd...than concepts such as the “poor in spirit” or one who desires to “enter through the narrow gate.”

As the students advance, passages without names of specific people can be selected. To answer the questions in number 3, tell the students to simply see if the words themselves evoke any particular feeling. Do they call to mind a previous, or presently occurring, incident or relationship in your life?

Initially, select 20-25 verses for each meditation. If that seems to be too much, use 10-15 verses.

Some Suggested Scriptures for use with the meditation sheet

Luke 1: 26-38	The Annunciation to Mary
Luke 2: 1-20	The Birth of Jesus
Luke 22:1 - 20	Jesus institutes the Holy Eucharist on Holy Thursday
Luke 22:39 - 65	Jesus’ Agony in the Garden and Arrest
Luke 23:33 - 56	The Crucifixion and Death of Christ
John 20:11-18	Jesus Appearance to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection
Acts 2:1-4	Pentecost: Public manifestation of the Church

(could also include 2:5-15, 22-24, 32-33, 36-40)

PRIOR TO TAKING STUDENTS THROUGH *PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE*:

It's important that the leader/teacher has prayed through the passage using the described progression himself/herself prior to guiding others through it.

CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE FOR PRAYER

It is crucial that a proper atmosphere for prayer be created. The enthusiasm, yet reverential awe, with which the leader/teacher approaches Sacred Scripture, impressively conveys to the students an understanding that this is, indeed, the very Word of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and capable of transforming—positively, joyously—our lives, our world, to the glory of God. It is said that Christianity is not so much taught, as “caught”, and in a very significant sense, this is true of prayer, the heart of our Catholic Faith.

One of the ways we can engender and maintain this respect for God’s Holy Word is by impressing upon the students the importance of silence during the actual time of prayerful meditation (note that following Step 1, no words need be spoken). To foster an environment of “heart to Heart conversation” and subsequent “listening,” silence **must** be practiced in order to be personally experienced; it does not come naturally in our noisy, distractible world. As the students become familiar with, and are guided appropriately through, this process, they will come to love, and be irresistibly drawn to, the peace and freedom of silent communion with the Lord Jesus.

This Modern English description of the timeless *Lectio Divina* was written by Carol Lankford. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2708)
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STUDENT INSTRUCTION PRIOR TO USING THE HANDOUT:

Prior to beginning the actual meditation, give an overview of the progression from step to step. Explain to the participants that this is a simple progression allowing one to meditate (ponder) on a passage of God's Word.

Explain that, for the first step, you will read the passage out loud and they should listen carefully.

In the second step, they will read the passage silently, asking Jesus to help them understand its meaning. Following this silent reading, they will “re-write” it in their own words, as if explaining it to a small child, perhaps a younger brother or sister. (Initially, students will give merely a reiteration of the events of the text. As they have more opportunity to practice *Lectio*, encourage and affirm them when they use words that display their understanding of the meaning and significance of the passage.)

In the third step, instruct them to choose a person to whom they feel “drawn”, or with whom they can somehow identify. It is important to discuss the possibilities for their choice of a person. For example, in the “Finding in the Temple” they can choose to “walk in the shoes” of Jesus, Mary, or Joseph; one of the Temple teachers; or any person Mary and Joseph met in seeking their Son. If they’re not drawn to a particular person, encourage them to be present as a “silent observer.”

Proceed in briefly pointing out the responses requested of them in points A—D. (This “walking” through the passage in the shoes of the person they’ve chosen allows them to “make it their own,” to be increasingly open to the heartfelt movements of the Holy Spirit. The narrative, and the truth it contains, is deposited more permanently in the storehouse of their mind and heart.)

Note that the question, “Is there anything you would say or do differently?” refers to their own personal life experience as recalled to their remembrance through the passage. (Along with the other questions, it is aimed at a natural, “unforced” personal application and possible resolution. Sometimes, a student will reply in reference to the person they’ve chosen from the passage (i.e., as “Peter” – expressing regret for having denied Jesus). This, too, is beneficial.)

Tell them you will quietly announce the transition to the fourth step (i.e., the ring of a bell), following the completion of points A—D, in accordance with the time allotted. If they have not finished A—D, they should stop anyway and enter the silent prayer with the rest of the group.

Following the period of complete silence in Step 4, close the meditation with a vocal group prayer (i.e., ask everyone to pray the Our Father).

AFTER THE MEDITATION IS FINISHED:

Ask for volunteers to give their responses/reflections. One or two can read their “summary” from Step 2. **Always ask which person** they chose from the passage; also, **ask which word** or phrase they chose **and why** it had a special meaning. It's beneficial, if any are willing, to briefly share points A—D in Step 3. Leaders/Teachers should be careful to affirm student's personal responses unless, of course, they have expressed error in understanding objective truth.

SUMMARY OF STEPS AND SUGGESTED TIMES:

1. **Reading the passage out loud.** [3 min.]
2. **Students/adults silently reading it again and writing on the main points.** [3 min.]
3. **Following the instructions— answering the questions as indicated. Requires a 3rd "closer look" at the text. Responses are written on the handout or in a prayer journal.** [5 min.]
4. **Students/adults closing their eyes and silently "listening" to Jesus.** [3 min.]

Remember, the purpose of this prayer "exercise" is not only to get to know Jesus better through greater intellectual knowledge and remembrance of Scripture, but even more importantly, to facilitate an opening to a greater "heart knowledge" of our Divine Savior. As students become accustomed to praying in this manner, the time allotted for Step 4 may gradually be extended.

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