

# **LECTIO DIVINA**

## **Introduction**

Lectio Divina is Latin for divine reading, spiritual reading, or "holy reading," and represents a method of prayer and scriptural reading intended to encourage a closer relationship with God and to provide special spiritual insights. It is a way of praying with Scripture that calls us to study, ponder, listen and, finally, pray from God's Word.

The principles of Lectio Divina were expressed around the year 220 AD by Origen, one of the early Church Fathers and theologians. He affirmed that to read the Bible profitably it is necessary to do so with attention, constancy and prayer. Origen also emphasized the value of reading scripture with attention to possible different levels of meaning.

The system of spiritual reading in four steps dates back to the 12th century. Around 1150, Guigo II, a Carthusian monk, wrote a book titled "The Monk's Ladder" (Scala Claustralium) where he set out the theory of the four rungs: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation.

## **The Lectio Divina Method**

Lectio Divina has been likened to "Feasting on the Word." The first part, Lectio (reading), is like taking a bite. Meditatio (meditation) is when we chew. Next Oratio (prayer) is the opportunity to savour and enjoy the taste. Finally, with Contemplatio (contemplation), the Word is digested and made a part of our body.

### **Lectio (reading)**

This first moment consists in reading the passage slowly and attentively several times.

### **Meditatio (meditation)**

A reflection on the text of the passage takes place, in which we think about how to apply the passage's meaning to our own life. Choose any phrase or word in the passage that strikes you as being of particular significance or importance to you.

### **Oratio (prayer)**

This is a response to the passage by opening our heart to God. It is not an intellectual exercise, but an intuitive conversation or dialogue with God. It can be based around the phrase or word you have chosen. This should not be confused with exegesis (the scholarly interpretation of Scripture). This is rather a very personal reading of the Scripture.

### **Contemplatio (contemplation)**

This moment is a time of simple, loving focus on God. In other words, it is a beautiful, wordless contemplation of God, a joyful rest in his presence.