

*Lectio Divina* (divine reading) is a form of prayer with scripture that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, helps us see ways in which God is calling us to grow in faith. Prayer with scripture can be intimidating if we aren't familiar with the Bible – but one of the advantages of *lectio* is that it does not require us to be a scripture scholar. Instead, we only need to pay attention to the ways that our attention is drawn to words and images in our reading, prompted by the Holy Spirit. Lectio follows a formal process, but it can be easily adapted to fit the needs of your family. I will outline a simple format below, but there are many other options out there.

First, create a prayerful space. It should be free of clutter and distractions, so turn off the TV, put on quiet music if there is a lot of background noise, etc. I would also encourage you to find something to help create sacred space – maybe a candle, a prayer card, or an icon. Select passage of scripture to read - for people trying this prayer process for the first time, I usually encourage the Gospel for Sunday Mass (which you can find at USCCB.org). Allow for some time for quiet, and turn your minds towards God. Finally, begin with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to be with us and help open up the Word. This stage is sometimes called PRAEPARATIO.

Read through the passage slowly, making mental notes of where your attention is drawn. It could be a particular word, phrase, image, command from Jesus, or even a feeling. If you are with a small group (family), you might pause after the first reading to share just that word/phrase. If you are by yourself, write your words down so that they don't get lost. This first movement is called LECTIO.

After a pause and some silence, read through a second time. This time through, we may notice the same word or phrase, or we might be drawn elsewhere. Wherever our attention may be drawn, our goal at the end of this reading is to look and see where this passage might apply to our lives. Again, share the fruit of this reflection with your companions or pause to journal and reflect. This portion of our prayer is called MEDITATIO.

Having heard God's word, we pause to share the fruits of our reflection with God. This is our opportunity to respond to the work of the Holy Spirit acting through Scripture. Together, we ponder the journey we are on together, and share our hopes, desires, fears, and challenges in love. We call this part of the process ORATIO.

Finally, we take this message with us throughout the rest of our day. Maybe we continue in silence for some time after or prayer, or perhaps we move on with the rest of our day. No matter what we do, we are encouraged to reflect on what we heard throughout our day. We recall the message as we go about our daily tasks. The more time we spend in reflection on scripture, the easier this process of continuous reflection becomes. We call this final part of the process CONTEMPLATIO.

I hope this process of prayer helps you engage with God's word, and helps you grow in your faith. Let us know if you try - and let us know how we can continue to help you grow in prayer!