

# Four Approaches to the Practice of Lectio Divina

## Father Thomas Keating

### Practice I – To Introduce Lectio Divina

A Scholastic Method of Lectio Divina for Community Prayer (with a brief sharing after each step).

1. **Lectio:** (Listening to the Word of God or Reading God's Word)
  - As we listen to the Word of God for the first time I invite you to be aware of any word or phrase that catches your attention – a word or phrase.
  - Read the passage slowly with appropriate pauses.
  - Allow 1 minute of silence for reflection.
  - Ask the listeners to share out loud to the whole group, if so moved to do so – what was the word or phrase that caught your attention in the reading?
  - After the sharing, allow a few moments of silence so that what was heard may sink deeper within.
  
2. **Meditatio:** (Reflecting on the Word of God)
  - As we listen to the Word of God for the second time I invite you to be aware of any reflection or thought that you become aware of as you listened – a reflection or thought.
  - Read the passage slowly with appropriate pauses.
  - Allow 1 minute of silence for reflection.
  - Ask the listeners to share out loud to the whole group, if so moved to do so – what reflection or thought that you became aware of as you listened?
  - After the sharing allow a few moments of silence so that what was heard may sink deeper within.
  
3. **Oratio:** (Responding to the Word of God) – Affective Prayer
  - As we listen to the Word of God for a third time I invite you to be aware of any prayer that rises up within you that expresses what you are experiencing in this Word of God.
  - Read the passage slowly with appropriate pauses.
  - Allow 1 minute of silence for reflection.
  - Ask the listeners to share out loud to the whole group, if moved to do so – a prayer that expresses what you are experiencing in the Word of God.
  - After the sharing allow a few moments of silence so that what was heard may sink deeper within.
  
4. **Contemplatio:** (Resting in the Word of God) – Contemplation
  - As we listen to the Word of God for a fourth time I invite you to just sit with the Word of God and allow God to speak to you in the silence of your hearts. God's first language is silence.
  - Read the passage slowly with appropriate pauses.
  - Allow 3 to 4 minutes of silence.

**Closing Prayer:** *Almighty God thank you for the gift of your Word. May we take the word or phrase that spoke to us, the thought that we became aware of and the prayer that came from our hearts, into the activity of our day (the time of retreat) as a reminder of our genuine desire to consent to your presence and action in our lives. We offer this prayer through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen*

Gently ring the bell to end the session and leave, if appropriate, in silence.

## Practice II – To Strengthen the Practice

### A Scholastic Method of Lectio Divina for Community Prayer (with a brief Faith Sharing at the end).

1. **Lectio:** (Listening to the Word of God or Reading God's Word)
  - As we listen to the Word of God for the first time I invite you to be aware of any word or phrase that catches your attention – a word or phrase.
  - Read the passage slowly with appropriate pauses.
  - Allow some minutes of silence for reflection.
  
2. **Meditatio:** (Reflecting on the Word of God)
  - As we listen to the Word of God for the second time I invite you to be aware of any reflection or thought that you become aware of as you listened – a reflection or thought.
  - Read the passage slowly with appropriate pauses.
  - Allow some minutes of silence for reflection; one might ask what is this text saying to me today?
  
3. **Oratio:** (Responding to the Word of God) – Affective Prayer
  - As we listen to the Word of God for a third time I invite you to be aware of any prayer that rises up within you that expresses what you are experiencing in this Word of God.
  - Read the passage slowly with appropriate pauses.
  - Allow some minutes of silence for reflection.
  
4. **Contemplatio:** (Resting in the Word of God) – Contemplation
  - As we listen to the Word of God for a fourth time I invite you to just sit with the Word of God and allow God to speak to you in the silence of your hearts. God's first language is silence.
  - Read the passage slowly with appropriate pauses.
  - Allow 3 to 4 minutes of silence.
  - Ask the listeners to join in a brief faith sharing that expresses what they are experiencing with the word of God.
  - After the sharing allow a few moments of silence so that what was heard may sink deeper within.

**Closing Prayer:** *Almighty God thank you for the gift of your Word. May we take the word or phrase that spoke to us, the thought that we became aware of and the prayer that came from our hearts, into the activity of our day as a reminder of our genuine desire to consent to your presence and action in our lives. We offer this prayer through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen*

Gently ring the bell and end the session in silence.

## Practice III – To Enter into the Contemplative Dimension of Lectio Divina

### A Monastic Method of Lectio Divina for Community Prayer

#### Preliminary Comments:

The monastic way is unstructured, in a sense methodless. One reads or listens to the word of God in a particular passage chosen for the occasion and then the only process is to follow the attraction of the Spirit.

For example:

- Read the passage slowly (with appropriate pauses). After a minute or two of silence, read it again.
- As you listen you may be aware of a phrase, sentence, insight or even a word in the sense of “message” that catches your attention (reading).
- Sit with that phrase, sentence, insight or word, repeating it gently over and over in your heart, not thinking about it but just being with it (pondering it in your heart).
- Be aware of any prayer that rises up within you that expresses what you are experiencing (responding).
- Or just rest in the phrase, sentence, insight or even one word, resting in God beyond your thoughts, reflections, and particular prayer. Resting in God in the simple attraction of interior silence (resting).

**Closing Prayer:** *Almighty God, thank you for the gift of resting in your Word. May we take the phrase, sentence, insight or even one word that spoke to us and the prayer that came from our hearts into the activity of our day as a reminder of our genuine desire to consent to your presence and action in our lives. We pray that we may become this Word through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen*

**Optional:** After the closing prayer, ask the participants to join in a brief faith sharing that expresses in some way what they experienced with the word of God. After the sharing, allow a few moments of silence so that what was heard may sink deeper within.

Gently ring the bell to end the session.

## Practice IV – Ongoing Daily Practice of Lectio Divina

### The Private Practice of Lectio Divina

1. Read the Scripture passage for the first time (it helps to read it aloud softly). What phrase, sentence or even one word stands out to you? Begin to repeat that phrase, sentence or one word over and over, allowing it to settle deeply in your heart. If any insights arise do not expand these insights right now. This can be done at a later time. Simply return to the slow repetition of the phrase, sentence or one word, savoring it in your heart.
2. Relish these words; let them resound in your heart. Read the passage as often as you wish, learning these words by heart as you continue to repeat them in your mind.
3. Let an attitude of quiet receptiveness permeate the prayer time, an openness to a deeper hearing of the Word of God.
4. As you continue to ‘listen’ to this phrase, sentence or word, a prayer may arise spontaneously in response. Offer that prayer; then return to repeating the word in your heart.
5. When you find that you move beyond the meaning of the phrase, sentence or word to the gift of the divine presence of the Word, rest in God as long as the Presence or attraction remains.

**Note:** These steps are not separate, but flow into each other. There is no hurry to finish any particular chapter or verse; it is more important to listen deeply to God’s word to you at this moment.

**To extend the practice:** When the time you have chosen for Lectio Divina is over, take the phrase, sentence or word into your daily activity and listen to it, reflect on it, pray over it and rest in it as time allows during the day. Allow it to become part of you.