

Day of Reflection

**Biblical
Spirituality**

Participant Handouts

Canticle of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79)

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
he has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Savior,
born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets he promised of old
that he would save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all who hate us.

He promised to show mercy to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
to give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be forever. Amen.

The Four Movements of Lectio Divina

1. Lectio: Reading / Listening

The art of lectio divina begins with cultivating the ability to listen deeply, to hear "with the ear of our hearts" as St. Benedict encourages us in the Prologue to the Rule. We should allow ourselves to become women and men who are able to listen for the still, small voice of God (I Kings 19:12); the "faint murmuring sound" which is God's word for us, God's voice touching our hearts. This gentle listening is an "atunement" to the presence of God in that special part of God's creation which is the Scriptures.

The cry of the prophets to ancient Israel was the joy-filled command to "Listen!" In lectio divina we, too, heed that command and turn to the Scriptures, knowing that we must "hear" - listen - to the voice of God, which often speaks very softly. In order to hear someone speaking softly we must learn to be silent. If we are constantly speaking or if we are surrounded with noise, we cannot hear gentle sounds. This is the first step of lectio divina, appropriately called lectio - reading.

The reading or listening which is the first step in lectio divina is very different from the speed reading which modern Christians apply to newspapers, books and even to the Bible. Lectio is reverential listening; listening both in a spirit of silence and of awe. In lectio we read slowly, attentively, gently listening to hear a word or phrase that is God's word for us this day.

2. Meditatio: Meditation

Once we have found a word or a passage in the Scriptures which speaks to us in a personal way, we must take it in and "ruminate" on it. The image of the ruminant animal quietly chewing its cud was used in antiquity as a symbol of the Christian pondering the Word of God. For us today these images are a reminder that we must take in the word and while gently repeating it to ourselves, allow it to interact with our thoughts, our hopes, our memories, our desires. This is the second step or stage in lectio divina - meditatio. Through meditatio we allow God's word to become His word for us, a word that touches us and affects us at our deepest levels.

3. Oratio: Prayer

The third step in lectio divina is oratio - prayer: prayer understood both as dialogue with God, that is, as loving conversation with the One who has invited us into His embrace; and as consecration, prayer as the priestly offering to God of parts of ourselves that we have not previously believed God wants. In this consecration-prayer we allow the word that we have taken in and on which we are pondering to touch and change our deepest selves. ...God invites us in lectio divina to hold up our most difficult and pain-filled experiences to Him, and to gently recite over them the healing word or phrase He has given us in our lectio and meditatio. In this oratio, this consecration-prayer, we allow our real selves to be touched and changed by the word of God.

4. Contemplatio: Contemplation

Finally, we simply rest in the presence of the One who has used His word as a means of inviting us to accept His transforming embrace. No one who has ever been in love needs to be reminded that there are moments in loving relationships when words are unnecessary. It is the same in our relationship with God. Wordless, quiet rest in the presence of the One Who loves us has a name in the Christian tradition - contemplatio, contemplation. Once again we practice silence, letting go of our own words; this time simply enjoying the experience of being in the presence of God.

Instructions for Ignatian Contemplation Prayer

1. Pick one story from the list provided

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men (Matt 9:27–31)
Jesus heals a paralytic (Mark 2:1-12)
Jesus Walks on Water (Matt 14:22–43)
Jesus Heals Jairus' Daughter and the Bleeding Woman (Mark 5:21–43)
A Woman Anoints Jesus (Mark 14:3–9)
Jesus' Heals in Simon's House (Luke 4:37–41)
Jesus Goes to the Cross (Luke 23:26–30)
Jesus Raises Lazarus (John 11:28–44)
Thomas Believes Jesus Is Alive (John 20:24–2)
The Call of Matthew (Matt. 9:9-13)
The Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:2-11)

2. Find a place you feel comfortable, your first gesture might be to open your hands, and to ask God to open your heart and imagination. Take several deep breaths in and out and begin by praying this short formula.

“Lord, pour out on us the spirit of understanding, truth, and peace.
Help us to strive with all our hearts to know what is pleasing to you,
and when we know your will make us determined to do it.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.” Amen

Taken from Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers

3. Imagine the physical environment. Read the passage the first time at a neutral rate, and wait one minute.
4. Imagine the other people in the scene with Jesus. This time read the passage slowly, pausing after each phrase and then wait in silence for two minutes.
5. Imagine what your body feels. Read the passage again, emphasizing the action words, and wait in silence for four minutes.
6. Hear what the speakers in the passage are saying, and then read the passage emphasizing the spoken words. Wait in silence for six minutes.
7. Imagine yourself as one of the biblical characters in the passage. Read the passage one last time and freeze your mind with a particular picture that involves you and Jesus. Invite him to talk to you, listen to what he has to say and spend time with him as a good friend. Spend eight minutes in silence.
8. Check with your facilitator if it is time to regroup.