

Lectio Divina: Divine Reading for Difficult Times

Reading 20

As we navigate difficult and challenging times, and we are unable to attend Church services, we offer some divine reading passages and guidance for following an ancient approach to contemplating passages from Scripture. Below, we will offer a text for you to follow this week.

We follow guidance from a wonderful little book entitled *Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina*, by Thelma Hall.

This exercise can be carried out alone, or with others.

There are four steps to the *Lectio Divina* exercise:

1: *Lectio* – Reading and listening to the Word of God.

2: *Meditatio* – Reflecting on the word.

3: *Oratio* – The Word touches the heart.

4: *Contemplatio* – Entering the Silence “Too Deep for Words.”

Thelma Hall writes, “I prepare for this sacred reading by taking time to quiet my body and mind.” Take time to find a comfortable and favoured place to sit. Perhaps go through a few minutes of being conscious of your breathing.

Next, read the scripture passage with your full attention. This is step 1: *Lectio* – Reading and listening to the Word of God. Just read and re-read enough to take it all in.

Now, it’s time for *Meditatio* – Reflecting on the word. Perhaps think of fully seeing and understanding the passage for the very first time; even if you have read the passage before. You may find that a specific word or phrase seems to stand out from the rest of the passage. Take time to wonder why.

Thirdly, turn to *Oratio* – The Word touches the heart. Let the words tell you why you must listen to these words at this specific time. This is a ‘settling down’ moment where you can take as much time as you need to fully *be* with the words. You may wish to ask yourself, “Why is God focussing me on these specific words?”

Finally, turn to *Contemplatio* – Entering the Silence “Too Deep for Words.” Think of this as new beginning rather than the end of the process. Take time to imagine hearing these words for the very first time in terms of the depth of their guidance to you. God is taking over. Sit still. Do nothing for a little while.

With all this in mind, here are a couple of passages for you to take on in your *Lectio Divina* exercise this week:

You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall⁵ and like the heat of the desert. You silence the uproar of foreigners; as heat is reduced by the shadow of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless is stilled.⁶ On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines.⁷ On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations;⁸ he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.⁹ In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." (Isa 25:4 NIV)

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.³ Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer.⁵ Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.⁶ The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.⁷ Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel,⁹ for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. (2Ti 2:1 NIV)

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