
LECTIO DIVINA HANDBOOK

Guidance for Maximizing the Effectiveness of Lectio Divina for the Lay
Carmelite Communities of the Most Pure Heart of Mary



Order of Carmelites, Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary

Acknowledgement

This guide to Lectio Divina for the Lay Carmelite communities of the Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary was created by the Lectio Divina Task Force. The members of the Task Force were:

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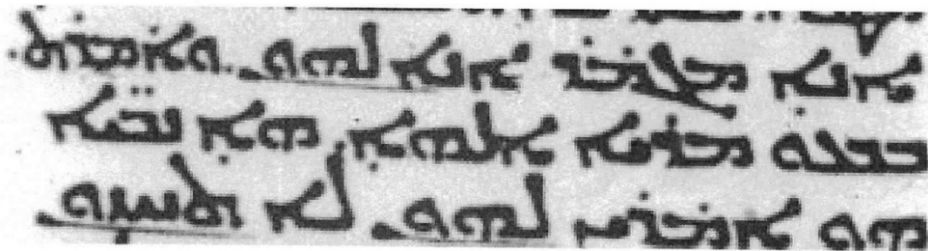
Preface

*Into the Land of Carmel
Learning to Lead the Lectio Divina*

St. Ephrem on Lectio Divina

Who is capable of comprehending the extent of what is to be discovered in a single utterance of Yours? For we leave behind in it far more than we take from it, like thirsty people drinking from a fountain. The facets of His word are more numerous than the faces of those who learn from it. God depicted His word with many beauties, so that each of those who learn from it can examine that aspect of it which he likes. And God has hidden within His word all sorts of treasures, so that each of us can be enriched by it from whatever aspect he meditates on. For God's word is the Tree of Life which proffers to you on all sides blessed fruits; it is like the Rock which was struck in the Wilderness, which became a spiritual drink for everyone on all sides: 'They ate the food of the Spirit and they drank the draft of the Spirit'. Anyone who encounters Scripture should not suppose that the single one of its riches that he has found is the only one to exist; rather, he should realize that he himself is only capable of discovering that one out of the many riches which exist in it. Nor, because Scripture has enriched him should the reader impoverish it. Rather, if the reader is incapable of finding more, let him acknowledge Scripture's magnitude. Rejoice because you have found satisfaction, and do not be grieved that there has been something left over by you. A thirsty person rejoices because he has drunk: he is not grieved because he proved incapable of drinking the fountain dry. Let the fountain vanquish your thirst, your thirst should not vanquish the fountain! If your thirst comes to an end while the fountain has not been diminished, then you can drink again whenever you are thirsty; whereas if the fountain had been drained dry once you had had your fill, your victory over it would have proved to your own harm. Give thanks for what you have taken away, and do not complain about the superfluity that is left over. What you have taken off with you is your portion, what has been left behind can still be your inheritance.

from Ephrem's *Commentary on the Diatessaron*



Order of Carmelites, Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary

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1. Introduction

For some centuries reading the Bible in one’s own language was rather frowned upon, and this led to a lessening of the practice of Lectio Divina. Thankfully in recent years, along with the whole Church, the Carmelite Order has rediscovered the importance of Lectio Divina as a privileged way of growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ. Through the practice of Lectio Divina, as individuals and as community, we leave space for God’s Word to transform us so that we may begin to look upon our world as it were with the eyes of God and to love what we see with the heart of God. Lectio Divina, a Latin term, means divine reading and describes a way of reading the scriptures whereby we gradually let go of our own agenda and open ourselves to what God wants to say to us.

(Carmel’s Call II Prayers and Hymns, Part 4, p 111)

The stages of Lectio Divina date back to the 12th century. The ones traditionally recommended and used during prayer by many are:

- ❖ *Lectio* (Reading)
- ❖ *Meditatio* (Reflection)
- ❖ *Oratio* (Response)
- ❖ *Contemplatio* (Rest)

There are no strict “rules” for the proper way to pray with Scripture, only guidelines to help create a meaningful and growth-filled prayer experience, both individually and in community. The emphasis is always on simplicity—fewer words and more listening in silence.

For over twenty years, the Lay Carmelite Office (LCO) has implemented a required meeting agenda for all Lay Carmelite community meetings. This agenda included a brief period dedicated to *Lectio Divina*. Over time, as we became more familiar with the practice of *Lectio*, we realized that the allotted time was not enough for this vital part of our Carmelite life. Therefore, starting in August 2025, the required meeting agenda has been revised to allocate more time for *Lectio* and slightly less time for discussions during ongoing formation. Please see Form A-15 in the Appendix of this handbook for the updated timeline details.

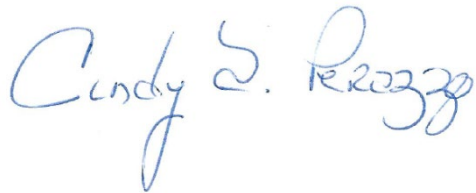
I encourage you to utilize this new *Lectio Divina* handbook as a resource to enhance the communal as well as individual practices you use going forward. Print these pages out and include them in your Phase I and Phase II formation guides and workbooks, Community Manual, and Carmel's Call, twelfth edition.

Finally, as encouragement in our *Lectio Divina* journey, I'd like to share a few words from Stephen J. Binz, author of "Conversing with God in Scripture: A Contemporary Approach to Lectio Divina" (Word Among Us Press, 2008). For me, this quote explains "where we are and where we want to be" as Lay Carmelites exploring this very essential prayer form. He says:

"Many have mistakenly considered Lectio Divina as a highly specialized method of prayer...But it is important to say at the outset that Lectio Divina is not a methodical system...The most important thing to keep in mind when practicing Lectio Divina is that it is meant to lead us to a personal encounter and dialogue with God...There is no goal other than prayerfully reading Scripture in God's presence with a desire to deepen our heart to heart intimacy with him... (Chapter 3, p 43)

I consider this a fine explanation of the deep desire God will strengthen in our hearts as we cultivate our *Lectio Divina* practices going forward. I wish that you receive many true blessings as you enter more fully into your Carmelite journey through life and into eternity!

Sincerely in Carmel,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cindy A. Perazzo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cindy A. Perazzo, T.O. Carm.
Provincial Coordinator for Lay Carmelites
Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary

2. Overview

"Lectio Divina is an authentic source of Christian spirituality recommended by our Rule. We therefore practise it every day, so that we may develop a deep and genuine love for it, and so that we may grow in the surpassing knowledge of Christ. In this way, we shall put into practice the Apostle Paul's commandment, which is mentioned in our Rule: "The sword of the Spirit, too, which is the word of God, is to dwell abundantly in your mouth and in your hearts; and whatever things you have to do, let them be done in the word of the Lord."

3. *Carmelite Constitutions (2019), n. 85.*

2.1 What is *Lectio Divina*?

Lectio Divina, which translates to "divine reading," is a traditional method of praying with Scripture. It is a contemplative practice that involves reading, reflecting, praying, and contemplating on a passage of Scripture to deepen spiritual growth and develop a personal relationship with God. This handbook will explore the purpose, methods, and steps of *Lectio Divina*, as well as its benefits, common challenges, and tips for a successful practice.

The origins of *Lectio Divina* can be traced back to early Christian monastic communities, particularly in the 3rd century. The practice can be attributed to a desire among monks to deepen their connection with God through the reading of Scripture. These monks recognized the importance of engaging the intellect, heart, and soul in their interaction with God's Word. Over time, *Lectio Divina* became a central practice within monastic life and eventually spread beyond the walls of monasteries to lay individuals seeking a more intimate encounter with God.

2.2 Purpose of *Lectio Divina*

The primary purpose of *Lectio Divina* is to foster a deep and transformative encounter with God through reading and meditation on Scripture. It aims to go beyond just intellectual understanding of the text and invites individuals to open themselves to the transformative power of God's Word. *Lectio Divina* seeks to create a space for dialogue with God, where individuals can listen attentively,

You read the Word of God to listen to what God wants to say to you, to understand His Will.

respond sincerely, and ultimately draw closer to God. It is a practice that cultivates a deeper understanding of Scripture, encourages spiritual growth, enhances prayer life, and nurtures a personal relationship with God.

When you begin a period of *lectio divina*, your goal is not to study. You are not reading the sacred text to boost your knowledge. You are not trying to have some extraordinary experience. You read the Word of God to listen to what God wants to say to you, to understand His Will, and based on that, to "live in allegiance to Jesus Christ." You should have the same attitude as Mary - "Let it be with me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38).

2.3 Benefits of Practicing *Lectio Divina*

The Church promotes many wonderful ways to pray. The Church Fathers first introduced a special method: holy reading, meditating, and praying with scripture, called *Lectio Divina*, or "divine reading." The practice of *Lectio Divina*

provides numerous benefits to communities and individuals who practice this spiritual exercise regularly. These benefits include gaining a deeper understanding of Scripture, fostering spiritual growth, improving prayer life, and building a personal relationship with God.

By reading, reflecting, praying, and contemplating Scripture, people are invited into a closer encounter with the Divine.

Practicing *Lectio Divina* regularly encourages spiritual growth. Reading, meditating, praying, and contemplating Scripture nourishes the soul and builds a stronger connection with God. Through this practice, people develop virtues like patience, humility, and trust. They become more aware of God's presence and more open to the Holy Spirit's work in their lives. Spiritual growth naturally follows from this enriching practice. *Lectio Divina* supports one's prayer life by offering a structured and intentional way to engage with Scripture. It adds a contemplative dimension to prayer, fostering a deeper communion with God.

Perhaps the most important benefit of practicing *Lectio Divina* is its opportunity to develop a personal relationship with God. By reading, reflecting, praying, and contemplating Scripture, people are invited into a closer encounter with the Divine. They come to know God more deeply as they listen, respond, and surrender themselves to God's presence.

3. Models for Lectio Divina

Note: This Chapter presents several different Models, or Forms, of performing Lectio Divina in community (Collatio) during your monthly Formation meeting. Some of the Models and points of emphasis might also work for individual/private Lectio Divina, but the focus in this Chapter is communal Lectio Divina.

3.1 General Guidelines

This section provides general guidelines and advice for conducting community *Lectio*, regardless of the method style used. You can adapt them as needed for your environment and community.

Group Size

If possible, make groups of no more than eight people, preferably five or six. Break the community into smaller groups to meet this limit. This helps to ensure that everyone in the group can participate.

Leader

Designate a leader for *Lectio Divina* and consider alternating leaders each month. Rotating leaders helps to develop leadership within the community. The leader opens and closes *Lectio* with a simple prayer (See Appendix B for examples) and ensures that each person has an opportunity to share.

Readers

“Varying the voices,” male and female readers help people to hear the sacred text differently. Each reader emphasizes different words or uses different inflections, which might allow listeners to hear something new with each reading.

Community Director

Include the scripture reading for *Lectio* in the agenda and send it to each member a few days before the meeting. This allows everyone to prepare prayerfully for the “group sharing” ahead of time.

Opening and Closing Prayers

Regardless of which style of *Lectio* your community uses, it should begin and end with a prayer. The leader of the *Lectio* should recite the prayers. These can be spontaneous or chosen from traditional prayers for opening or closing *Lectio*. Some traditional prayers are in Appendix B.

Setting the Proper Environment

Creating a calming and quiet environment can help everyone prepare for *Lectio*. This can be achieved by dimming the room's lights or turning off the bright lights and using candlelight instead. Briefly playing calming music before you start *Lectio* also helps set a proper environment. CarmelPrays.com's Meditation Playlist (<https://carmelprays.com/meditation>) or searching YouTube for Taizé Prayer are good sources for this music.

Each style of *Lectio Divina* includes silent pauses. Don't rush past these pauses just to finish the *Lectio*.

A Prayerful Silent Pause

Each style of *Lectio Divina* includes silent pauses. Don't rush past these pauses just to finish the *Lectio*. The Word of God calls us to wait and receive it through silent meditation. Quiet yourself and open your heart to welcome God's presence in His Word; a silence that creates space in your heart so that God can come and speak to you.

3.2 Common Challenges in Practicing *Lectio Divina*

While *Lectio Divina* is a transformative spiritual practice, it comes with its challenges. Common hurdles that communities might face include distractions, difficulty in focusing, and resistance to silence.

Distractions

In our fast-paced, technology-driven world, it's easy to get distracted during *Lectio Divina*. The constant buzz of notifications, the demands of work and family, and the busyness of life can prevent full engagement with the Scripture passage. Overcoming distractions requires intentional effort to create a quiet, solitary space free from external interruptions. Make sure everyone's cell phones are silenced.

Difficulty in Focusing

Focusing and sustaining attention can be a challenge for some people during *Lectio Divina*. Wandering thoughts, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating can block the experience of deep reflection and prayer. Cultivating focus and attention takes patience and practice. Techniques like breath awareness or centering prayer can help people quiet their minds and keep their attention in the present moment.

Resistance to Silence

Silence and stillness may be uncomfortable for some people, causing resistance to practicing *Lectio Divina*. The lack of external noise and distractions can trigger restlessness or a desire to fill the silence with activity. Recognizing and accepting this resistance is essential, as silence

opens space for encountering God. Slowly embracing silence and becoming comfortable in stillness in God's presence can help overcome this challenge.

3.3 Different *Lectio Divina* Methods

3.3.1 The Four-Step Process

In the 12th century, a holy Carthusian monk named Dom Guigo II established a specific structure for *lectio divina* in his well-known work *Scala Claustralium* (The Ladder of Monks). In it, he outlined a four-step approach to praying with Holy Scripture: reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. This common method of *lectio divina* is still practiced today.

What use to spend your time in reading or listening to the deeds of the Holy Fathers, unless we bite and chew on them through meditation, and draw out somewhat and swallow it and send it to the heart, so that we may find, and by this understand, our own defaults, and after such knowing that we set ourselves to work that we may attain those virtues that were in them? If you will have your meditation richly rewarded you must pray with devotion, through which you may win to the sweetness of contemplation. Through this then you may understand that reading without meditation is idle, meditation without prayer is without effect, but prayer with devotion wins contemplation. ...Thus should we climb by this ladder from degree to degree, from stair to stair, and from virtue to virtue, until we see the God of gods in Sion, that is, in the bliss of heaven.

Dom Guigo II, Scala Claustralium

Lectio Divina consists of four distinct steps: *Lectio* (reading), *Meditatio* (meditation), *Oratio* (prayer), and *Contemplatio* (contemplation). These steps provide a framework for engaging with Scripture in a reflective and prayerful manner. Each step builds on the previous one and helps deepen understanding and connection with the Word of God.

Step 1: Lectio (Reading)

The first step of *Lectio Divina* is the initial reading of the Scripture passage chosen by the Community Director. Selecting a meaningful passage is essential, and it can be a specific choice or following a predetermined schedule, such as a daily lectionary of the Gospel reading for the coming Sunday. The community should approach the text with an open and receptive heart, allowing the words to resonate and speak to their inner being. During this step, it is important to read slowly and attentively, allowing the words to soak in and resonate. This deliberate reading creates space for the Holy Spirit to breathe life into the text and illuminate its meaning.

After a brief (about 2 minutes) period of silence, the Leader of *Lectio* will share a word or passage from the Scriptures that speaks to them personally. Everyone else in the community will then have the opportunity to share a word or passage one at a time, going around the room so everyone gets a chance to speak. If someone does not wish to speak, they can pass by saying “Amen.”

Step 2: Meditatio (Meditation)

The passage is slowly read once more. The goal of the second step, meditation, is to help the community enter a deeper reflection on the reading. This involves contemplating the meaning and significance of the passage and thinking about how it relates to one’s own life and experiences in Carmel.

It's a time for personal reflection and exploration of the themes and messages in the Scripture. During meditation, one might consider the historical and cultural context and connect the Scripture with one's own beliefs and values.

Reflecting on the Text

The second element is meditation (*meditatio*). In this step, the community takes time to ponder and reflect on the meaning and significance of the Scripture passage. This involves examining the historical and cultural context in which it was written. By reflecting on the passage, the community gains a deeper insight into its intended message and how it applies to their own life.

Contextualization

Contextualizing the Scripture passage is an essential aspect of meditation. It involves considering the larger narrative within which the passage is situated, as well as its intended audience and purpose. Understanding the context helps to shed light on the meaning and relevance of the text, allowing for a deeper engagement and connection.

Personal Application

Another essential part of meditation is making personal applications. This step encourages the community to consider how the Scripture passage speaks to their own life and experiences. It promotes self-examination and introspection by reflecting on how the message of the passage relates to one’s beliefs, values, and challenges. This personal application offers an opportunity for growth and transformation in light of God’s Word.

Connecting with Other Scriptures

The final aspect of meditation involves connecting the Scripture passage with other Scriptures. This practice explores the interconnections and echoes within the Bible, allowing for a broader understanding of God's message throughout Scripture. By linking various passages, the community gains insights into the overarching themes and motifs present in the Word of God.

After a brief silence of about two minutes, the Leader of *Lectio* will share their reflection on the passage's significance in relation to their life and growth in Carmel. The rest of the community will then have the opportunity to share one at a time, going around the room to ensure everyone gets a chance to speak. This is not a time for discussion or responding to someone's reflection. If someone does not wish to speak, they can pass by saying "Amen."

Step 3: Oratio (Prayer)

The passage is slowly read once more. After the meditation phase, one moves into the third step: prayer. In this stage, one responds to the Scripture passage through heartfelt prayer and dialogue with God. Prayer involves expressing gratitude for the insights gained during reading and meditation, seeking guidance in areas of challenge or confusion, and asking for healing or forgiveness. In this prayerful engagement with the text, you open yourself up to the possibility of contemplation. This step deepens the relationship with God as one engages in a conversation with the Divine.

Dialogue with God

During this prayer step, one talks to God. This conversation involves speaking honestly and openly, sharing thoughts, feelings, and desires. It's a time to grow the relationship with the Divine, express both joys and struggles, and seek comfort, wisdom, and guidance.

Expressing Gratitude

An essential element of prayer is expressing gratitude. It is an opportunity to acknowledge and give thanks for the insights and revelations gained through the process of *Lectio Divina*. Gratitude opens the heart to receive God's grace and cultivates an attitude of humility and appreciation for God's presence in our lives.

Seeking Guidance

In prayer, the community may also seek guidance from God. This involves sharing areas of challenge, confusion, or discernment and asking for wisdom and clarity. By being open to God's guidance, the community invites divine insight and direction in navigating life's complexities.

Personal Intentions

Finally, prayer within the context of *Lectio Divina* encourages each person to share their personal intentions. These may include prayers for oneself, loved ones, communities, or larger global issues. By bringing these intentions to God, the community trusts in the power of prayer and seeks God's intervention and grace in various life situations.

After a brief silence of about two minutes, the Leader of *Lectio* shares their prayer to God, which involves speaking honestly and openly, sharing thoughts, feelings, expressing gratitude, and personal intentions. The rest of the community will then share one at a time, going around the room to ensure everyone gets a chance to speak. This is not a time for discussion. If someone does not wish to speak, they can pass by saying “Amen.”

Being open to God’s Will is an integral part of contemplation. It requires letting go of personal desires and plans and being receptive and responsive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Step 4: Contemplatio (Contemplation)

The final stage of *Lectio Divina* is contemplation. It is a moment of silent reflection and stillness, allowing the Scripture to sink deeply into one’s heart and mind. *Contemplatio* involves being fully present in God’s presence, surrendering to God’s Will, and remaining open to any divine inspiration that may emerge. It is a time to simply rest in the loving embrace of the Divine, listening for God’s voice in the silence.

Silent Reflection

Silent reflection is a vital part of contemplation. It involves a period of stillness and inner quiet, during which each person allows the Scripture passage and the insights gained to settle more deeply into their heart and mind. The silence creates a sacred space for communion with God and helps integrate the Word of God more fully into one’s being.

Being in God’s Presence

Contemplation is about being present in God’s presence. It is a time of surrender, acknowledgment, and resting in the loving embrace of the Divine. By removing distractions and adopting an attitude of receptivity, the community opens itself to deeper communion and union with God.

Openness to God’s Will

Being open to God’s Will is an integral part of contemplation. It requires letting go of personal desires and plans and being receptive and responsive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Contemplation helps deepen trust in God’s plan and invites us to align our will with the Divine’s.

Receptivity to Divine Inspiration

Finally, contemplation nurtures openness to divine inspiration. This step helps each person to listen carefully to God’s voice, allowing God’s wisdom and guidance to flow freely. By maintaining a posture of openness, the community becomes more attuned to the promptings and invitations of the Holy Spirit, receiving inspiration for their faith and discipleship journey.

After a brief silence of about two minutes, the Leader of *Lectio* will say the Closing Prayer.

3.3.2 The Four-Step Process with Repetition

This method is similar to the Four-Step Process described above, but after the initial reading, another reader repeats the sacred text multiple times (two or more), with each repetition deepening the connection with the passage. With each repetition, new insights or themes may emerge, revealing the richness and depth of God’s Word. The repetitive nature of *Lectio Divina* enables a gradual unveiling of God’s message. Once the initial reading has been repeated multiple times, the steps continue as described above, in the Four-Step Process.

3.3.3 The Five Movement Written Process

Pope Benedict XVI presented this method of Lectio Divina and the worksheet, which Rev. Randy Soto, SThD, interpreted. The Task Force has modified the worksheet for use within a monthly formation meeting for the Lay Carmelites of the Most Pure Heart of Mary.

The publication of *Verbum Domini* followed the twelfth ordinary general assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which took place in 2008 and was dedicated to “The Word of God in the Life and the Mission of the Church.” The documents produced before and during the Synod mentioned several methods for a faith-filled and fruitful approach to sacred Scripture. However, the most significant focus was on *Lectio Divina*, “which is truly capable of opening up to the faithful the treasures of God’s word, but also of bringing about an encounter with Christ, the living word of God,”

The 5 Movements

The leader starts with an opening prayer, calling on the Holy Spirit and asking for His help (see Appendix B for examples of Opening Prayer). For each Movement, a community member reads the sacred text, followed by the community reflecting on the passage. Each of the Five Movements is meant to use a different human quality. Each community member briefly writes their answer to the 3 or 4 questions.

<p>The First Movement is called <i>Lectio</i>, which is to read the Sacred Text: using the Intellect. We <i>seek</i> the objective meaning of the Text. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “<i>It opens with the reading (Lectio) of a text, which leads to a desire to understand its true content: what does the biblical text say in itself? Without this, there is always a risk that the text will become a pretext for never moving beyond our own ideas</i>” (VD 87).</p>		
<p>Characters: Who are the characters in the reading?</p>	<p>Circumstances: Events, when, how, where, & why?</p>	<p>Teachings: What does the reading say?</p>

The **Second Movement, *Meditatio***, involves meditating on the Sacred Text, where we use our heart to understand what the text is saying to us. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “Next comes meditation (*Meditatio*), which asks: what does the biblical text say to us? Here, each person, individually but also as a member of the community, must let themselves be moved and challenged” (VD 87).

Assimilation: What is the text telling me?	Association: How does it affect my life?	Correlation: What does it remind me of?

The **Third Movement** is called *Oratio*, which is to pray with the Sacred Text: using our whole Being, we converse with God through prayer. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “Following this, comes prayer (*Oratio*), which asks the question: what do we say to the Lord in response to his word? Prayer, as petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise, is the primary way by which the word transforms us” (VD 87).

Petition: What is the Text asking me to do or to change?	Intercession: The Grace we need from God.	Thanksgiving: Thanking the Lord for His gifts.	Praise: In God’s Providence to achieve the goal.

The **Fourth Movement** is called *Contemplatio*, a passive act of contemplation: using Nothing, we allow the Lord to open us and reveal to us whatever, however, and whenever. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “Next comes contemplation (*Contemplatio*), during which we take up, as a gift from God, His own way of seeing and judging reality, and ask ourselves what conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of us? [...] Contemplation aims at creating within us a truly wise and discerning vision of reality, as God sees it, and at forming within us “the mind of Christ” (1Cor 2:16)” (VD 87).

Contemplate: What is God’s loving message that He has given me?	Comprehend: How am I a part of God’s plan?	Taste: What are His gifts and mercy that he has shared with me?

<p>The Fifth Movement is called <i>Actio</i>, an active resolution to bring the Text to life: using the power of God’s Will, we engage to cooperate (FIAT) with God’s grace to act upon the Word. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “The process of <i>Lectio Divina</i> is not concluded until it arrives at action (<i>Actio</i>), which moves the believer to make their life a gift for others in charity. We find the supreme synthesis and fulfillment of this process in the Mother of God. For every member of the faithful, Mary is the model of docile acceptance of God’s word, for she “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Lk 2:19; cf. 2:51)” (VD 87).</p>		
<p>Recognize: What is it that I am supposed to do?</p>	<p>Plan: How am I to do it?</p>	<p>Evaluate: How am I progressing?</p>

Conclude the Lectio by offering a prayer of thanksgiving to God for all gifts received.

How to Use This Version

A two-page, two-sided, stand-alone version of the worksheet can be found in Appendix C if you wish to use this version of *Lectio Divina* in your community. When it’s time to begin *Lectio Divina*, the Leader of *Lectio Divina* should hand out a blank copy of the worksheet to each community member.

The leader begins with an opening prayer. Each Movement starts with someone reading aloud the sacred text, followed by four minutes of silence during which each member of the community writes down brief answers to the questions for that Movement. After the silence, the leader begins by reading their answer to one of the questions for the Movement. This process continues around the group, giving everyone a chance to share one of their answers. This process for each movement includes sacred reading, writing down answers, and sharing responses. The activity repeats until the first four Movements are completed. The fifth Movement (Action) should be done at home during the following week, thereby giving each person more time to reflect on their response and the actions inspired by the *Lectio*.

3.3.4 The Traditional Three-Step Process

Our Lay Carmelite communities have traditionally used this three-step process for many years. Unfortunately, too many communities rush through the steps, trying to finish quickly and not allowing enough time for silence. As mentioned earlier, *Lectio Divina* should be approached contemplatively, taking time to hear God’s words in the silence.

The Leader begins with an opening prayer, coordinates the process, and facilitates sharing. The same text is read out loud three times, followed each time by 2 minutes of silence and an opportunity for each member of the group to share the fruit of their *lectio*.

Step 1: Lectio

The first reading aims to hear a word or passage that touches the heart. When the word or phrase is identified, it is silently absorbed, then gently recited and reflected upon during the subsequent silence. After that silence, each person shares which word or phrase has moved them—a simple statement of one or a few words. No elaboration. There is no discussion.

Step 2: Meditatio (Meditation)

The second reading (by a member of the opposite sex from the first reader, if possible) is intended for "hearing" or "seeing" Christ in the text. Each person reflects on the word that has touched their heart and considers where the word or phrase connects with their life that day. In other words, how is Christ the Word touching their own experience, their own life as a Carmelite? How are the different members of the group seeing or hearing Christ reach out to them through the text? Then, after a moment of silence, each member shares what they have "heard" or "seen."

Step 3: Oratio (Prayer)

The third and final reading is intended for experiencing Christ “calling us forth” into action or identity. Members consider what Christ in the text is prompting them to do or become today or this week. After the moment of silence, each person shares for the last time. The sharing can begin with "I believe that God wants me to _____ today/this week."

4. Recommended Resources

4.1 Websites

The internet is very dynamic; some of these links may have changed.

1. The Carmelites Australia & Timo- Leste <https://www.carmelites.org.au/lectiodivina>
2. Summary of Pope Benedict's writing on *Verbum Domini*
<https://prodigalcatholic.com/2019/08/26/summary-of-verbum-domini-by-pope-benedict-xvi/#:~:text=In%202010%2C%20Pope%20Benedict%20XVI%20wrote%20a%20post-synodal,of%20God%20in%20the%20life%20of%20the%20Church.>
Full text: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html
3. A Lively, Ancient Tradition A new book teaches us how to meet Jesus in the Scriptures, Craig Morrison, O.Carm https://wau.org/archives/article/a_lively_ancient_tradition/
4. *Carmelite reflections on Lectio Divina, the prayerful reading of the Bible*, Carlos Mesters, O.Carm. (translated by Míceál O'Neill, O.Carm) <https://ocarm.org/en/item/987>
5. General Commissariat of St. Therese & St. Albert | INDIA
<http://frns.org/ocarm.in/index.php/spirituality/lectio-divina/>
6. Carmelite monastery in Baltimore, MD <https://www.baltimorecarmel.org/liturgy-and-communal-prayer/lectio-divina/>
7. Our Lady of Mercy LCC [An Introduction to Lectio Divina | Our Lady of Mercy](#)
8. Face-to-Face with the Gospel, Craig E. Morrison, O. Carm https://wau.org/android_app/article/face-to-face-with-the-gospel/?key=8D23FA1C3FA5B6CF6494EDD83F8C5&subscribed=&mass_readings=1
9. The Ancient Practice of *Lectio Divina*, Stephen J. Binz <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/prayer/adult-faith-formation-binz>
10. To read an introduction to *Lectio Divina* by Romero de Lima Gouvêa, O.Carm., <https://carmelite.org/spirituality/scripture-lectio-divina/>
11. *Lectio Divina – Prayerful reading of the Word*, Bruno Secondin, O.Carm.
<https://www.lectiodivina.it/wordpress/>

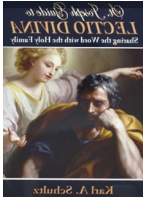
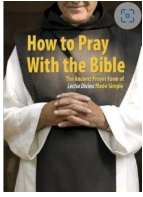
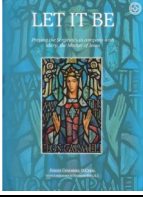
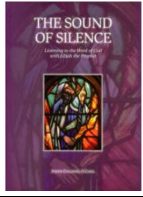
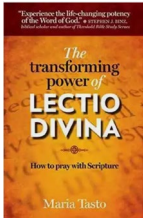

4.2 Videos

Lectio Divina: A Step by Step Guide. Fr. Dennis Mancuso OCD [Lectio Divina: A Step-by-Step Guide](#)

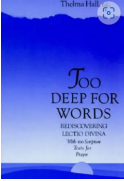
Lectio Divina Series - Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina, Fr Thomas Keating
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2D1_zq38dqA

4.3 Books

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	Title	Author
	St. Joseph Guide to Lectio Divina	Schultz, Karl A
	How to Pray with the Bible: The Ancient Prayer Form of Lectio Divina Made Simple	Schultz, Karl A
	<i>Let It Be: Praying the Scriptures in Company with Mary, the Mother of Jesus</i>	Joseph Chalmers, O.Carm
	<i>The Sound of Silence: Listening to the Word of God with Elijah the Prophet</i>	Joseph Chalmers, O.Carm
	<i>The Transforming Power of Lectio Divina</i>	Maria Tasto
	<i>Lectio Divina and the Practice of Teresian Prayer</i>	Sam Anthony Morello

	<p><i>Lectio Divina Renewing the Ancient Practice of Praying the Scriptures</i></p>	<p>M. Basil Pennington</p>
	<p><i>Discovering Lectio Divina: Bringing Scripture into Ordinary Life</i></p>	<p>Evan B. Howard, James C. Wilhoit</p>
	<p><i>Conversing with God in Scripture: A Contemporary Approach to Lectio Divina</i></p>	<p>Stephen J. Binz</p>
	<p><i>Transformed by God's Word: Discovering the Power of Lectio</i></p>	<p>Stephen J. Binz</p>
	<p><i>Lectio Divina Bible Study: The Mass in Scripture</i></p>	<p>Stephen J. Binz</p>
	<p><i>Lectio Divina Bible Study: Learning to Pray in Scripture</i></p>	<p>Stephen J. Binz</p>
	<p><i>Lectio Divina Bible Studies: The Creed in Scripture</i></p>	<p>Stephen J. Binz</p>

	<i>Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina</i>	Thelma Hall, RC
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4.4 Fr. Bruno Secondin, O. Carm. Lectio Divina Website

Father Bruno’s website features numerous articles on Lectio Divina. The default language is Italian, but most internet browsers (Chrome, Edge, Safari, etc.) automatically translate the website into English or Spanish. This list highlights many of the articles.

- [BRUNO SECONDIN and ANTONIETTA AUGRUSO, *Bagliori di Luce. Lectio divina on the Gospel of Matthew.*](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN, *Come rugiada di fuoco. Proposals for lectio divina on the Old Testament.*](#)
- [ANTONIO NEPI, *The Cloak and the Room, the Oil and the Road. Meetings and symbols of fraternity with the prophet Elisha.*](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN, *Prophets of the Living God. Walking with Elijah*](#)
- [CRISTIANA DOBNER, *What are these stones? Listening to the silent presence.*](#)
- [CD – *Lectio divina 1996-2012. Meditative refrains \(for the 200th meeting: 9 March 2012\).*](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN – ANTONIETTA AUGRUSO, *If your heart sees. The paths of light.*](#)
- [GUGLIELMO CAZZULANI, *After Long Slavery. Healing Encounters in the Gospel of Mark.*](#)
- [ANTHONY CILIA, *Lectio divina sui Vangeli festivi. For the liturgical year A.*](#)
- [ANTHONY CILIA, *Lectio divina sui Vangeli festivi. For the liturgical year B.*](#)
- [ANTHONY CILIA, *Lectio divina sui Vangeli festivi. For the liturgical year C.*](#)
- [MARIA ANASTASIA OF JERUSALEM, *On the traveling chariot. Nomads and pilgrims in the light of the Word.*](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN, *Lectio divina – Poster. How it can become believing and prayerful reading.*](#)

- [Laminated bookmark for lectio divina.](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN, When the Word catches fire. Lectio divina for difficult days.](#)
- [MARIA ANASTASIA OF JERUSALEM, Dancing Wombs. Lectio divina on female biblical figures.](#)
- [FRANCO MASTRODDI-PAOLA ENA, Un canto nella notte mi ritorna nel cuore. Meditative refrains for lectio divina.](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN – ANTONIETTA AUGRUSO, Arise, don't be afraid. Lectio divina on the Gospels of Mark and Matthew.](#)
- [SEBASTIANO AUGRUSO, And will wipe away every tear from their eyes. From escape to exodus with the Word of God.](#)
- [JOSEPH CHALMERS, The Sound of Silence. Listening to the Word with the prophet Elijah.](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN – ANTONIETTA AUGRUSO, If you are not reborn from above... Lectio divina on texts by John.](#)
- [CARLOS MESTERS, I keep your Word in my heart. Lectio divina on the festive readings of the Gospels of Luke and John.](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN, \(ed.\), Listen and you will live. Lectio divina on Old Testament texts.](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN, The Word of God is not chained. Lectio divina on the Acts of the Apostles and the Letters of Paul.](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN – ANTONIETTA AUGRUSO, The Lord looks at the heart. Experiences of change in the light of the Word.](#)
- [GIOVANNI GROSSO, Con Maria figlia di Sion. Listening to the Word.](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN, Reading the Word prayerfully. Lectio divina on the Gospels of Mark and Luke.](#)
- [CARLOS MESTERS, Far ardere il cuore. Introduction to prayerful reading of the Word.](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN, Let me hear your voice. Lectio divina on passages from the Old Testament](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN, Come pioggia di primavera. Lectio divina for Lent and Easter.](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN, The Prayerful Reading of the Word. "Lectio divina" in community and in the parish. Vol. 2.](#)
- [BRUNO SECONDIN, The Prayerful Reading of the Word. "Lectio divina" in community and in the parish. Vol. 1.](#)

5. Articles, Excerpts & Quotes

5.1 Origins

Lectio Divina finds its origins in the early church, both in Eastern and Western cenobitic traditions of the early monasteries. According to the Rule of St. Albert, Chapter 10, the early Carmelites were instructed to meditate on scripture.

All are to remain in their cells or near them, meditating day and night on the Law of the Lord and keeping vigil in prayer, unless they are occupied with other worthy activities.”¹

Although these early Carmelites were semi-eremitic, in comparison to their brothers in monastic traditions, they likely adopted some of the methods of prayer that were common to organized religious institutions. Unfortunately, we do not have much written evidence to support this. Still, a reasonable assumption exists that they would have been exposed to this or instructed in these methods by clerics serving under the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

We are called to experience living Christ in scripture, and perhaps this is the reason that the Church has encouraged further study for all the faithful:

“In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:1-5

“They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road and he opened to us the scriptures?’” Luke 24:32

Some of the earliest references to a *Lectio Divina* as a “method of prayer” are given by Saint Basil the Great in the Eastern monastic tradition, and Saint Benedict of Nursia in the Western monastic tradition. Both guides continued the tradition of the early desert fathers and mothers who entered a life of solitude to seek God in prayer. Additional references from Athanasius and Guiggo II offer more priority to spiritual reading and meditation as a structured activity.

Basil (d. 349), in his *Asketikon* (Rule of St. Basil)¹, gives the church a formal structure for the Liturgy of the Hours, from the ancient Judaic tradition and from The Acts of the Apostles. He also teaches about becoming proficient, “we could wipe away the stains of sin by assiduous prayer and persevering meditation on the will of God. It is impossible to gain proficiency in this meditation and prayer, however, while a multitude of distractions is dragging the soul about and introducing into it anxieties about the affairs of this life.” *Asketikon* Q.6.

Athanasius (d. 373), from the 39th *Festal letter* on Easter, “You will not see anyone who is really striving after his advancement who is not given to spiritual reading. And as to him who neglects it, the fact will soon be observed by his progress.”

Benedict (d. 547), in his Rule, reminds monks that “Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brothers should have specified periods for manual labor as well as for prayerful reading (*lectioe divina*).” *RB*, 48:1²

Guiggo II (d. 1188), in his *Ladder of Monks*, gives us the four phases of *Lectio Divina* recognized today. He describes them as “four stages” or “rungs” of the ladder. “One day when I was busy working with my hands I began to think about our spiritual work, and all at once four stages in spiritual exercise came into my mind: reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. These make a ladder for monks by which they are lifted up from earth to heaven.”³ p. 68.

The unknown author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* offers the reader a careful consideration; “So I want you to understand clearly that for beginners and those a little advanced in contemplation, reading or hearing the Word of God must precede pondering it and without time given to serious reflection there will be no genuine prayer.” *COU* 35⁴.

St. John of the Cross affirms the four moments in *Lectio Divina* in his *Maxims on Love*, no. 79; “Seek in reading and you will find in meditation; knock in prayer and it will be opened to you in contemplation.”⁵

5.2 Scripture and Tradition

Our Catholic Tradition relies on Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, as given from the Magisterium, to understand God’s revelation for humanity. All the faithful, lay people, and consecrated religious are encouraged to engage in spiritual reading.

¹ Silvas, A.M. (2013). *The Rule of St. Basil in Latin and English: A Revised Critical Edition*. Liturgical Press.

² Benedict, Fry, T., Baker, I., Horner, T., Raabe, A., Sheridan, M., & Neufville, J. (1981). *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with notes*. Liturgical Press.

³ Guigo II, Colledge, E., & Walsh, J. (1981). *The ladder of monks: A letter on the Contemplative Life and twelve meditations*. Cistercian Publications.

⁴ Bangley, B. (2009). *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Paraclete Press.

⁵ Kavanaugh, K. (1979). *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, ICS Publications.

Sacred Scripture is understood as Divinely inspired, where “God is the author of Sacred Scripture. “The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.” (CCC, Pt 1, 105 & DV 11)^{6&7}

Sacred Tradition helps us interpret the scriptures within our social and moral context, whereas "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal." Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own "always, to the close of the age" (CCC, Pt. 1, 80)

“Sacred theology rests on the written word of God, together with sacred tradition, as its primary and perpetual foundation. By scrutinizing in the light of faith all truth stored up in the mystery of Christ, theology is most powerfully strengthened and constantly rejuvenated by that word.” (DV 24).

“We see clearly, then, how important it is for the People of God to be properly taught and trained to approach the sacred Scriptures in relation to the Church’s living Tradition, and to recognize in them the very word of God. Fostering such an approach in the faithful is very important from the standpoint of the spiritual life.” (VD 18)⁸

5.3 Modern Considerations

Over the six decades following the Second Vatican Council, the practice of prayer and participation in the liturgical celebrations of the Church have been embraced by the laity in profound ways. Through formal ministerial roles in the liturgy itself, to leading the Liturgy of the Hours, and scripture study groups are very common.

A growth in lay vocations has also been experienced, where members make solemn promises to live their life according to the charisms of various religious congregations approved by the Church. The Carmelite Order has embraced the role of lay vocations as an important contribution to the Carmelite family and its historic charism of prayer.

This growth in practice has also offered some development of how ancient methods of prayer can be integrated into the secular state. Some modern scholarship on the practice of *Lectio Divina* would be welcome formation material for those seeking to grow in this spiritual practice.

Fr. Luke Dysinger, OSB, has written extensively on the topic of *Lectio Divina*. In his article, “Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina,” he reminds us that contemplation is not a goal per se, but a posture of gratitude for God’s gift; “How different this ancient understanding is from our

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (2022). Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

⁷ Dei Verbum. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation 1965

⁸ Verbum Domini. Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on “Word of God” 2008

modern approach! Instead of recognizing that we all gently oscillate back and forth between spiritual activity and receptivity, between practice and contemplation, we today tend to set contemplation before ourselves as a goal, something we imagine we can achieve through some spiritual technique. We must be willing to sacrifice our “goal-oriented” approach if we are to practice *lectio divina*, because *lectio divina* has no other goal than spending time with God through the medium of His word.”⁹

Fr. Michael Casey, OCSO in his book *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*, gives us a modern expression of the four phases of Guiggo as four “moments” where “the word is addressed to our spirit, and at that level we become aware that the Word is no longer an intermediary between us and God; we experience the Word as Person.” (SR p. 57)¹⁰

Stephen Binz, in *Conversing with God in Scripture*, takes the reader down a challenging path of making space for the fourth moment of Lectio Divina, “*contemplatio*.” In the modern mind, contemplation has been largely separated as another form of prayer. For many, there is a “resistance to contemplation” where “we define people primarily by their doing rather than their being...simply being in the presence of God without accomplishing anything seems like a waste of time to many people.”¹¹ (CWGIS p. 86)

Fr. Christopher O’Donnell, O. Carm., in *Prayer: Insights from St Therese of Lisieux*, reintroduces us to St. Therese, a teacher of prayer. Fr. O’Donnell delves into the life of the Little Flower as a student of prayer, particularly her time with Mental Prayer and with Sacred Scripture. He writes, “Therese studied the scriptures carefully” and had a “special gift she received of being able to penetrate the meaning of God’s Word, so that it became alive for her.”¹² (p. 77).

For St. Therese, the scriptures were also a guide to finding answers to problems facing us. Fr. O’Donnell explains that for the question about “how to be holy, since the ways of the great saints appeared to be beyond her. She searched and found the two texts (Prov 9:4 and Isaiah 66:13)” which would give her what we now know as the Little Way. (p. 79)

⁹ Dysinger, L. (1990). SAINT ANDREW’S ABBEY & SAINT JOHN’S SEMINARY

¹⁰ Casey, M. (1995). *Sacred Reading: The ancient art of Lectio Divina*. Liguori Publications.

¹¹ Binz, S. (2008). *Conversing with God in Scripture*. The Word Among Us Press.

¹² O’Donnell, C (2001). *Prayer: Insights from St. Therese of Lisieux*. Veritas Publications.

6. Personal *Lectio Divina*

Reflection by Desi Byerley, T.O. Carm.

I like to begin my day with Morning Prayer before moving into *Lectio Divina*. It's a quiet time for me with few distractions. It provides me with the time and a peaceful setting to be in God's presence. But, if I'm being honest, there are occasions when I struggle with *Lectio Divina*. Some days it feels like it's another box to check off. Sometimes I ask myself, how do I go deeper in this prayer if I'm struggling? Sister Libby Dahlstrom, O. Carm., once said, "all you have to do in prayer is just show up." I remind myself to be present with no expectations or hidden agendas. Let go and let God. He's waiting for us to show up and listen to His message for us.

Method

I'm guided by the four steps of this prayer: *Lectio* (reading), *Meditatio* (meditation), *Oratio* (prayer), and *Contemplatio* (contemplation). I start by prayerfully reading the selected passage, then I begin to focus on a word or phrase that caught my attention and sit with that for a while. The next time I read that piece of scripture, I put myself in the setting where the passage is taking place. I try listening at a deeper level. What is God saying to me? The third reading of the passage is where I respond to God by having a conversation, speaking from my heart about what that word or passage means to me. Finally, *lectio* ends with time in silence, which allows the whole prayer experience to sink into me.

Trust

Sometimes I have a clear understanding of what God is saying to me through *Lectio Divina*. Sometimes it isn't clear right away. By trusting in God and regularly practicing *Lectio Divina*, I know God Will reveal, in time, what He has planned for me. I was recently praying with Matthew 9:27-31. Two phrases spoke very loudly to me. The first was when Jesus asked the blind men, "Do you believe that I can do this?" and the second was, "Let it be done for you according to your faith." My practice of *Lectio Divina* is ever evolving as I contemplate God's words for me, believe, and have faith.

6.1 Tips for Successful Personal *Lectio Divina* Practices

To help ensure a successful and fruitful *Lectio Divina* practice, the following tips can be helpful:

Choosing a Regular Time and Place

Establishing a regular time and place for *Lectio Divina* can create a sense of structure and consistency. Whether it is in the morning before starting the day or in the evening before going to bed, setting aside a specific time allows for integrating this practice into the daily routine. Likewise, creating a sacred space free from distractions helps foster an environment suitable for prayer and reflection.

Creating a Sacred Space

Designating a specific area as a sacred space can enhance the overall ambiance and focus during *Lectio Divina*. This might be a corner in a room, a quiet garden, or a dedicated prayer room. Personalizing the space with meaningful objects, such as a crucifix, religious artwork, or candles, can foster a sense of sacredness and draw one's attention toward the Divine.

Using Different Bible Translations

Exploring different translations of the Bible can provide new perspectives and insights *during Lectio Divina*. Each translation offers its own nuances and interpretations, enriching the experience of engaging with Scripture. Switching between translations occasionally can expand one's understanding and spark new reflections.

Seeking Guidance from Spiritual Directors

Talking with a spiritual director or mentor can give helpful guidance and support when practicing *Lectio Divina*. These people are experienced in spiritual development and can provide valuable insights, suggestions, and encouragement. Their wisdom and guidance can help you handle any challenges or questions that come up during the practice.

Integrating Lectio Divina into Daily Life

While *Lectio Divina* can be practiced as a formal, dedicated exercise, it can also be easily woven into daily routines. Here are some ways to include *Lectio Divina* in our everyday activities.

Praying with Scripture during Daily Activities

Throughout the day, whether during moments of waiting, commuting, or routine tasks, one can reflect on Scripture and say short prayers. By bringing the Word of God into these everyday situations, individuals keep a continuous conversation with God, deepening their awareness and connection with the divine.

Applying Lectio Divina to Decision-Making

Lectio Divina can be a helpful tool when making decisions or seeking guidance. By bringing the decision or question before God during *Lectio Divina*, individuals invite divine wisdom and

direction into the discernment process. By reflecting and praying on God’s Word, one gains clarity and insight that can inform and shape decisions.

Sharing Insights with Others

The insights and reflections gained from *Lectio Divina* can be shared with others, creating opportunities for community growth and support. Small groups, friends, or family members can gather to discuss and reflect on Scripture passages, sharing personal experiences and insights. This sharing of wisdom enhances understanding and strengthens the bonds within a Carmelite community.

Appendix A – UPDATED Form A-15 from Community Manual

Required Agenda for Lay Carmelite Community Meetings – PCM

(Revised Sept 2025)

The agenda, as explained below, requires a minimum meeting time of 2 ½ hours.

PART ONE – COMMUNAL PRAYER (about 30 minutes) Note: Opening Prayer - p. 81 in CARMEL'S CALL

- A. **Liturgy of the Hours: 12 - 15 minutes.** The preferred book to use is the one-volume version called *CHRISTIAN PRAYER*; the 4-volume version called *LITURGY OF THE HOURS* is also appropriate.
- B. **Lectio Divina:** usually takes **30 minutes** and is best done in small groups of 5 or 6 people. The recommended Scripture passage to use is the Gospel of the Sunday closest to your meeting day.

PART TWO – HOMEWORK FROM THE CARMELITE ORDER (minimum of 15 minutes)

- A. **Read aloud and discuss anything that has been sent** from the Lay Carmelite Office (LCO) or your Regional Coordinator (RC) since the last community meeting.
- B. **Read from CARMEL'S CALL for 15 minutes every month** --Read aloud & discuss as needed each paragraph of the Rule of St. Albert, the Rule for the Third Order of Carmel (also referred to as "Constitutions" or "Living the Carmelite Way"), the Provincial Statutes, and all chapters of CARMEL'S CALL that contain any directives. **(See the end of this Agenda for the parts of CARMEL'S CALL that are to be read & understood.) This is an ongoing assignment that is to be part of every general community meeting.** When the community has read through (sequentially) all of the designated pages, it starts again at the beginning. NOTE: If there is something from the LCO or the RC that month, it takes priority and must be read and discussed first, before reading from CARMEL'S CALL. For example, if it takes 5 minutes to read/discuss the material from the LCO or the RC, then for that month, you'd only read from CARMEL'S CALL for 10 minutes. (A + B = 15 minutes).

PART THREE – LOCAL COMMUNITY (CARMELITE) BUSINESS (about 10 minutes)

PART FOUR – ONGOING FORMATION (1 ¼ hours of the meeting; 30 min. home prep.)

Study in depth, as an adult group, some particular aspect of Carmelite Spirituality. This is typically done by studying and discussing a Carmelite book as part of an adult study group.

Every member should have a copy of the book. An assignment is made for each member to read before the next meeting, underlining the ideas/sentences that were significant to them. (This assignment should take 30-45 minutes to complete to prepare for the next meeting.)

Then, during the meeting, the community breaks into smaller groups of about 5 or 6 to discuss the pages that have been read. This should take at least 1 ¼ hours of the meeting. (Along with the 30 minutes of Lectio Divina and 30 minutes spent reading the assignment ahead of time, these 1 ¼ hours total more than the 2 hours required for ongoing formation.) – Ongoing Formation does NOT mean having someone give a "presentation," but rather that all members take responsibility to participate actively in the discussion by being prepared and having read ahead of time whatever the assignment is for that meeting. Note: Closing Prayer – p. 81 in CARMEL'S CALL

HOMEWORK FOR THE ORDER (contained in CARMEL'S CALL AND THE COMMUNITY MANUAL)

(Revised Sept 2025)

Below are the various parts of CARMEL'S CALL (12th edition) and The Community Manual (2015 edition) that contain important explanations and information. At each monthly general meeting, your LCC should spend 15-20 minutes reading or familiarizing itself with these sections of CARMEL'S CALL and THE COMMUNITY MANUAL.

NOTE: If your community has read through the sections listed here at least 4 times over the last several years, then we NOW RECOMMEND that you continue reading/becoming familiar with the five (5) sections marked with >>>

<u>CARMEL'S CALL</u>	(TWELFTH EDITION)
PAGES	TOPIC
1-4	Introductory Pages
	<u>Spiritual Documents and Legislation</u>
>>>7-12	Rule of St. Albert
>>>15-39	Rule for Third Order of Carmel
>>>41-78	Provincial Statutes
83	Prayers and Hymns for Special Occasions
>>>105-109	Liturgy of the Hours
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Handbook**

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Appendix B – Opening & Closing Prayers for Lectio Divina

These Opening and Closing Prayers in this Appendix are presented as suggested prayers before and after Lectio Divina. You are not required to use these prayers as opposed to using your own prayer.

Opening Prayers

- Dear Lord, as we begin this time of Lectio Divina, we open our hearts to listen to you. We know that even a child can hear your voice. We pray with the little boy Samuel, “Speak Lord, for your servants are listening” (1 Samuel 3:9, 10).
- You are the Potter, O Lord; we are the clay in your hands. As we meditate on Scripture, may your words form our hearts so that we may be more like Jesus Christ. (Inspired by Isaiah 64:8 and Psalm 33:15).
- Lord Jesus Christ, “You alone have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). You are the Word made flesh (John 1:14). We come to you in this time of Lectio Divina, eager to hear from you.
- Dear God, when you speak, you impart life (Genesis 1). Your words are living and active (Hebrews 4:12). All of Scripture is inspired by you and useful to train us to become more like Jesus (2 Timothy 3:16). We ask you to speak to us through this Lectio and help us to apply your grace and truth to our lives today.
- Lord Jesus, You who explained the Scripture to your disciples on the road to Emmaus, be with us now as we listen to Your Word and to one another. Help us to recognize Your presence in our lives and speak to us through one another.
- Dear Father, You who are God Almighty and a merciful God, receive the prayer of your children, as the Savior that You have sent as a new light on the horizon of the world, rises again and shines on our entire lives.
- Lord, let the light of your glory shine within us and lead us through the darkness of this world to the radiant joy of our eternal home. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.
- Father of love, hear our prayers. Help us to know your Will with courage and faith. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Closing Prayers

- The leader closes with a prayer of gratitude for God's presence in the lives of all gathered there, and the group concludes with the Our Father.
- Each person can be invited to express their own prayer of gratitude or petition, and then the Our Father is prayed together.
- The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack. In green pastures, You let me graze; to safe waters, You lead me; You restore my strength. You guide me along the right path for the sake of Your name. Even when I walk through a dark valley, I fear no harm, for You are at my side. (Psalm 23)
- God, light of all nations, give us the joy of lasting peace and fill us with your radiance as you filled the hearts of our fathers. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen
- Father of love, hear our prayers. Help us to know your Will and to do it with courage and faith. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.
- May the words of my mouth always find favor, and the whispering of my heart, in your presence, Yahweh, my rock, my redeemer. (Ps 19: 14)
- Father of heaven and earth, hear our prayers and show us the way to your peace in the world. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Appendix C – The Worksheet for The Five Movement Written Process

The following pages can be printed for each community member to write the responses when using the Five Movement Written Process.

The **First Movement** is called *Lectio*, which is to read the Sacred Text: using the **Intellect**. We *seek* the objective meaning of the Text. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “*It opens with the reading (Lectio) of a text, which leads to a desire to understand its true content: what does the biblical text say in itself? Without this, there is always a risk that the text will become a pretext for never moving beyond our own ideas*” (VD 87).

Characters: Who are the characters in the reading?	Circumstances: Events, when, how, where, & why?	Teachings: What does the reading say?

The **Second Movement, Meditatio**, involves meditating on the Sacred Text, where we use our **heart to understand** what the text is saying to us. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “*Next comes meditation (Meditatio), which asks: what does the biblical text say to us? Here, each person, individually but also as a member of the community, must let themselves be moved and challenged*” (VD 87).

Assimilation: What is the text telling me?	Association: How does it affect my life?	Correlation: What does it remind me of?

The **Third Movement** is called *Oratio*, which is to pray with the Sacred Text: using our whole **Being**, we converse with God through prayer. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: *“Following this, comes prayer (Oratio), which asks the question: what do we say to the Lord in response to his word? Prayer, as petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise, is the primary way by which the word transforms us”* (VD 87).

Petition: What is the Text asking me to do or to change?	Intercession: The Grace we need from God.	Thanksgiving: Thanking the Lord for His gifts.	Praise: In God’s Providence to achieve the goal.

The **Fourth Movement** is called **Contemplatio**, a passive act of contemplation: using **Nothing**, we allow the Lord to **open us** and reveal to us whatever, however, and whenever. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: *“Next comes contemplation (Contemplatio), during which we take up, as a gift from God, His own way of seeing and judging reality, and ask ourselves what conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of us? [...] Contemplation aims at creating within us a truly wise and discerning vision of reality, as God sees it, and at forming within us “the mind of Christ” (1Cor 2:16)”* (VD 87).

Contemplate: What is God’s loving message that He has given me?	Comprehend: How am I a part of God’s plan?	Taste: What are His gifts and mercy that he has shared with me?

<p>The Fifth Movement is called Actio, an active resolution to bring the Text to life: using the power of God’s Will, we engage to cooperate (FIAT) with God’s grace to act upon the Word. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: <i>“The process of Lectio Divina is not concluded until it arrives at action (Actio), which moves the believer to make their life a gift for others in charity. We find the supreme synthesis and fulfillment of this process in the Mother of God. For every member of the faithful, Mary is the model of docile acceptance of God’s word, for she “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Lk 2:19; cf. 2:51)”</i> (VD 87).</p>		
<p>Recognize: What is it that I am supposed to do?</p>	<p>Plan: How am I to do it?</p>	<p>Evaluate: How am I progressing?</p>

Appendix D – *Visio Divina*

Visio Divina follows the pattern of *Lectio Divina* using sacred art. It fosters the practice of sacred seeing. If you wish, you can occasionally use *Visio Divina* instead of *Lectio Divina* to stimulate “experiencing” God’s words in a new way. Feel free to substitute *Visio Divina* once or twice a year for *Lectio Divina*.



D.1 What is “*Visio Divina*?”

This phrase means 'divine seeing.' What kind of prayer is this? Simply put, *Visio Divina* is a type of contemplative prayer that involves prayerful meditation accompanied by sacred images.

Consider how a striking crucifix invites us to deepen our encounter with Our Lord’s Passion. The visual image of His wounded side, pierced hands, and bloody head helps us recognize the reality of His sacrifice. It evokes feelings of gratitude, awe, and love. It’s a simple yet powerful process! *Visio Divina* has been a favorite prayer practice for many saints. St. John of Damascus, a 7th-century Doctor of the Church, was a great advocate for using icons in prayer.

*By engaging the senses, emotions, and imagination, *Visio Divina* can be a powerful way to enhance one’s prayer life. As our culture becomes increasingly visually oriented, an intentional approach to praying with images is more important than ever.*

By engaging the senses, emotions, and imagination, *Visio Divina* can be a powerful way to enhance one's prayer life. As our culture becomes increasingly visually oriented, an intentional approach to praying with images is more important than ever. *Visio Divina* encourages us to observe at a more contemplative pace. It invites us to see everything in an image, exploring it fully. It challenges us to look beyond first and second impressions, beneath initial ideas, judgments, or understandings. It also invites us to be seen, addressed, surprised, and transformed by God, who is never limited or confined to any image but speaks through them.

D.2 What are the Steps for “*Visio Divina*?”

The steps of *Visio Divina* are:

Step 1 - Opening Prayer: Like *Lectio Divina*, you should begin with an opening prayer. See Appendix B for opening prayer examples.

Step 2 - Gaze: In silence, slowly look at a sacred image, whether it's an icon, a painting, or any religious artwork. Allow your eyes to wander, taking in the details without rushing or overanalyzing. Imagine that you are in this scene. This step should take 2 to 3 minutes.

Step 3 - Reflect: Going around the room, everyone should briefly reflect on what the image is trying to convey. What attracts your attention? What emotions or thoughts arise? Consider the story, symbols, or figures in the artwork and how they relate to your faith. Once everyone had an opportunity to speak, take 2 to 3 minutes for silent reflection on what was shared.

Step 3 - Pray: Going around the room, everyone should briefly speak to God about what they saw and felt. This step is a personal conversation with the Lord, using the image as a starting point. Ask for insight, express gratitude, or share your concerns with God.

Step 4 - Rest: Finally, sit in silence for 2 minutes, resting in God's presence. Allow yourself to be still, trusting that God speaks in the silence of your heart. Let the image lead you into a more profound sense of peace and awareness of God's love.

Step 5 - Closing Prayer: Like *Lectio Divina*, you should end with a closing prayer. See Appendix B for opening prayer examples.

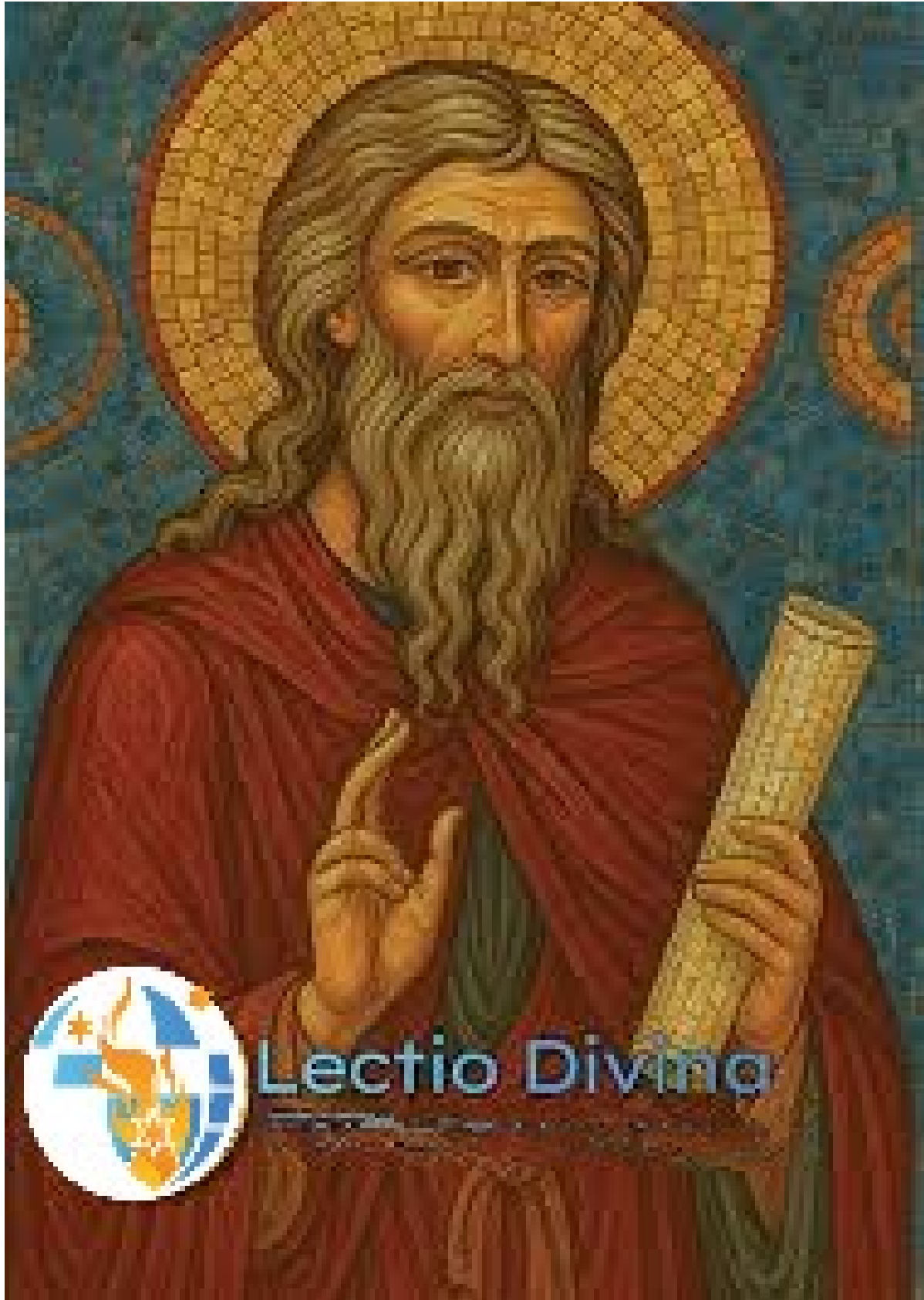
Visio Divina reminds us that our faith is not just heard or read but also seen and experienced through the beauty around us.

D3. Good Sources for Visio Divina Works of Art

As Catholics, not only is *Visio Divina* part of our spiritual tradition, but we also have a rich treasury of sacred art to pray with! The following links will offer a good selection of artwork for *Visio Divina*. As websites get updated and redesigned, some of these links might no longer work in the future. If a link doesn't work because the painting has moved, you can use the title and artist's name to search for other locations of these paintings.

- Caravaggio's **Call of St Matthew** – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Calling_of_Saint_Matthew#/media/File:Caravaggio_%E2%80%94_The_Calling_of_Saint_Matthew.jpg
- Rembrandt's **A Storm on the Sea of Galilee** - <https://www.faithandculture.com/home/2019/10/8/a-storm-on-the-sea-of-galilee>
- Caravaggio's **The Conversion on the Way to Damascus** - <https://www.faithandculture.com/home/2018/3/22/an-invitation-to-conversion>
- Caravaggio's **The Supper at Emmaus** - <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/michelangelo-merisi-da-caravaggio-the-supper-at-emmaus>
- Pieter Bruegel the Elder's **Census at Bethlehem** - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Census_at_Bethlehem#/media/File:Pieter_Bruegel_der_%C3%84ltere_-_Volksz%C3%A4hlung_zu_Bethlehem.jpg
- Domenico Ghirlandaio's **Nativity and Adoration of the Shepherds** - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adoration_of_the_Shepherds#/media/File:Anbetung_der_Hirten.jpg
- Ford Maddox Brown's **Jesus Washing Peter's Feet** - https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/12/Jesus_washing_Peter%27s_feet.jpg
- James Tissot's **The Prodigal Son in Modern Life series: The Return** - <https://www.wikiart.org/en/james-tissot/the-prodigal-son-in-modern-life-the-return>
- Andrey Rublev's **Holy Trinity (Troitsa)** - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_\(Andrei_Rublev\)#/media/File:Angelsatmamre-trinity-rublev-1410.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_(Andrei_Rublev)#/media/File:Angelsatmamre-trinity-rublev-1410.jpg)
- El Greco's **Christ on the Cross** - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ_on_the_Cross_Adored_by_Two_Donors#/media/File:El_Greco_-_Le_Christ_en_croix_ador%C3%A9_par_deux_donateurs_02.jpg
- El Greco's **Pentecost** - <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/pentecost/f83b921d-2380-4dc9-8532-b3c597dab1e8>
- Hugo Simberg's **The Wounded Angel** https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/72/The_Wounded_Angel_-_Hugo_Simberg.jpg

- **Return of the Prodigal Son** by Pompeo Batoni (1773)
<https://www.khm.at/en/objectdb/detail/186/>
- Marc Chagall's **The White Crucifixion** (1938)
<https://www.marcchagall.net/assets/img/paintings/white-crucifixion.jpg>
- **Christ of Saint John of the Cross**, Salvador Dali (1951)
- [Christ of Saint John of the Cross - Christ of Saint John of the Cross - Wikipedia](#)



Order of Carmelites, Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary