

Advent a time for Holy Listening...

*When Mary received the message of an angel,
she pondered these words in her heart.*

*This is our season of pondering the words of hope,
peace, joy, and love
found in our holy scriptures.*



Lecto Divina (“sacred reading”) is an ancient practice started in monastic communities as a way for the monks to pray. Benedict of Nursia (480-547) used this form of reading as **a way of encountering God** through the scripture that is heard. Benedict used to say: **“listen with the ear of our hearts.”**

Doing this form of “praying” is most beneficial in groups. It is meditative, quiet, and not hurried. It is worthy to note that Jesus often meditated on scripture; often quoting Hebrew scriptures and using psalms in worship and prayer. Jesus is called the WORD and we often hear Paul tell us **to let the Word of Christ dwell within us**. Listening to the word is a profoundly engaging and life changing spiritual exercise. It is not an intellectual exercise. It is a pondering exercise of listening with the heart open to receive.

This type of “praying” is usually done in small groups, but is now being used as an alternative approach in response to the gospel or other sacred text. It is a way of inviting the congregation to join the preacher in discovering how the scripture passage speaks to each one of us differently.

Lecto Divino is also used as a form of centering prayer with the intent to focus on a word/phrase and then simply rest in God’s presence.

Recently, we heard our collect from the Sunday closest to November 16:

Blessed Lord, who causes all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them... so that we may embrace and ever hold fast to the blessed hope of everlasting life...”

This type of “practice” invites all who hear the scripture to respond and offer what they heard either silently or aloud. This depends on the time, place, and group assembled.

How do you do lecto divina? There are many variations of this practice, but there are usually 3-4 steps.

It involves reading the same text 3-4 times usually by different voices and sometimes different versions of the same text.

The basic actions are:

1. Slowly read: Lectio/read
2. Silently reflect: Meditatio/meditate
3. Prayerfully respond: Oratio/pray
4. Simply rest in God's presence: Contemplatio/contemplate

What do we focus on after each reading?

1. After the first reading, people are invited to offer the **word or phrase** that spoke to them out loud with no commentary.
2. After the second reading, offer **an insight** into the church's or their own struggles or longings that arose out of the reading.
3. After the third reading, **ponder what God may be calling us** as the church to do or personally to respond, act.

Between each reading is at least 2-3 minutes or longer.

This depends on time, place, and discipline. It is in the silence in between that you get yourself out of the way and listen to God's voice. Be humble, quiet, and open to receive.

Other group or community ways to respond to the three readings:

1. What do you appreciate or admire about God in this passage?
2. Tie in the text with our church or world
3. What insight into your faith, influence or understanding of God came to you?

Other more personal ways to respond to the three readings:

1. What word, thought or feeling arose in your mind?
2. How is God inviting you to grow spiritually?
3. What is God calling you to do to serve God and others?

Taken from materials presented by:

James Martin SJ Read, Think, Pray, Act and Soul Shepherding.org

The Advent Examen: Ignatius Spirituality reflection questions

What have you done to prepare for Jesus to be re-born into your heart and our world?

Looking through the eyes of a child,

what do you see?

What surprises you?

What joy have you found today?

Where have you felt God's love?

What are you grateful for?

What did you recognize as a gift? What kind of gift?

When did you feel God close to you lately?

How do you prepare yourself to experience God's love, forgiveness, and hope?

Where do you struggle to see God?

When did you see the need for love and did not respond?

When have you walked away from an opportunity to forgive?

Ask God to open your heart to seek forgiveness and love?

What are you hopeful for?

What gift of hope will you share with others?

What gift is it you really need but are afraid to ask?

Ask God to bless all your life and know God accepts all of you and asks you to do the same.

Taken from online resources