

## ***Lectio Divina***

This method of prayer goes back to the early monastic tradition. There were not bibles for everyone and not everyone knew how to read. So the monks gathered in chapel to hear a member of the community reading from the scripture. In this exercise they were taught and encouraged to listen with their hearts because it was the Word of God that they were hearing.

When a person wants to use *Lectio Divina* as a prayer form today, the method is very simple. When one is a beginner, it is better to choose a passage from one of the Gospels or epistles, usually ten or fifteen verses. Some people who regularly engage in this method of prayer choose the epistle or the Gospel for the Mass of the day as suggested by the Catholic Church.

First one goes to a quiet place and recalls that one is about to listen to the Word of God. Then one reads the scripture passage aloud to let oneself hear with his or her own ears the words. When one finishes reading, pause and recall if some word or phrase stood out or something touched one's heart. If so, pause and savor the insight, feeling, or understanding.

Then go back and read the passage again because it will have a fuller meaning. Pause again and note what happened. If one wants to dialogue with God or Jesus in response to the word, one should follow the prompting of one's heart. This kind of reflective listening allows the Holy Spirit to deepen awareness of God's taking the initiative to speak with us.

### **The Rhythms and Steps in Lectio Divina**

The underlying process of *Lectio Divina* engages the whole person before Christ as it flows through four R's as we

1. slowly read (*lectio*),
2. silently reflect (*meditatio*),
3. prayerfully respond (*oratio*), and
4. simply rest in God's presence (*contemplatio*).

In *Lectio Divina* we read and re-read a Scripture passage (a story from the Gospels or a Psalm work especially well) slowly and prayerfully as a means of furthering our intimacy with Jesus and submitting to his kingdom rule in our lives. We approach the living Word of God ready to hear the Lord speak to us, anticipating that the historical and inspired text will be freshly applied by the Holy Spirit to the personal text of our lives today.

