


Contemplation is the ability to rejoice in God's light shining in our heart; it is tasting God's presence and seeing his face; it is experiencing his comfort and protection. Contemplation is a gift from God which he gives to whomever he wills, when and however he pleases. Thus we cannot be sure that we will experience that "light of God" at this moment in *LD*. God will give it to us as a gift in the moment he considers the right time. But we must not forget that *LD* is like the "right place" to experience contemplation as a gift from God.

We should commit ourselves to an attitude of profound silence with a willingness to wait... Prayer before the Holy Sacrament, or in the sacrarium are places that are appropriate for enjoying this experience of contemplation.

Fifth step: ACTION

Take the Word of God...



In this final moment we seek to apply to our life what God has revealed to us through reading and meditation, and what we have prayed and made our own through prayer and contemplation. The "first response" to God who spoke to us in the text took place in the dialogue of prayer. Now is the time for the "second response" in concrete action. The entire process of *LD* is not completed within the person who prays; rather it bears fruit in the life that has been impregnated with the values of the Gospel. What has been read, meditated, prayed and contemplated cannot be left to itself; it must be applied in a life that is coherent and committed to the values of God's Kingdom. Jesus said to his disciples, and among them in a particular way to the Holy Virgin: "Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:28). Mary's life and that of all authentic disciples of the Lord, reflect this teaching that expresses in synthesis the entire dynamic of *LD*: We "hear" the Word of God in order to put it into practice in our life, in history, in our daily experience.

**Would you like to try it?
Go ahead... the Lord is waiting
for you in his Word!**



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Start today with the Lectio Divina Scripture Journey based on the Roman Catholic Lectionary Calendar at:
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LEARNING TO PRAY WITH THE BIBLE

Lectio Divina, a genuine and appropriate spiritual journey in stages...

Do you want to pray?


Do you desire intimacy in your dialogue with God?

Do you want to discover God's will for your life?

Do you want to live out the Gospel's message and be authentically happy?

With *Lectio Divina*, you can, and here we show you how...

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Five questions that will help you discover *LD*: What? Where? When? What do I need? and How?

What is *LD*?

It is the personal or community reading of Scripture, embraced as God's Word inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Father, Benedict XVI, said in January, 2006:

"I exhort you to become intimate with the Bible, to keep it nearby, so that it might be for you like a compass indicating the way in which you are to walk. Reading it, you will come to know Christ. Saint Jerome observed: 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ'. One way that has been proven to enhance our understanding and taste for God's Word is the Lectio Divina, a genuine and appropriate spiritual journey in stages."

Where can you engage with *LD*?

In a place that is appropriate for praying: a temple, church, chapel, park, open field, room or hall... any quiet place where you will not be interrupted.

When can you get into *LD*?

Whenever you have a reasonable period of time to engage in dialogue with God (a minimum of twenty minutes).

What do you need for *LD*?

You start with a passage from Scripture about which you want to pray — preferably with the Gospel texts suggested in the Church's liturgy throughout the year, especially on Sundays. In this way you prepare your heart for the Sunday celebration of Eucharist.

How do I begin with *LD*?

You can do it alone or with others. It is done in steps, or stages. Before beginning, it is absolutely essential to invoke the Holy Spirit's presence. After settling down, becoming silent and calming your anxieties, you can invoke God the Holy Spirit to guide you from within as to how you should pray.

Five steps to practice *LD*: Reading, Meditation, Prayer, Contemplation and Action

First step: READING

What does the text say?

Once we determine the Bible text for prayer, we read it slowly and carefully. Then we keep silent for a few moments, then read it again.

We ask ourselves the question: **What does the text say?**

We place ourselves in the text by taking note of all that is especially significant: persons involved, places, times, feelings, action verbs, type of literature and ways of speaking. We write down what we are discovering.

If *LD* is done in a group, each one shares with the rest what he has discovered in the text.

In this step it is **God who speaks to us...**

Second step: MEDITATION

What does the text say to me?

At some point in the reading we *appropriate* for ourselves the Bible text and transform the earlier question to ask: What does the text *say to me*?

At this point we are no longer concentrating on the text as a whole, as in the former step, but rather taking note of a particular matter that has caught our attention and makes an impact on us. According to the particular circumstances of our life we begin to perceive that God is directing us in some specific way. Now is the time to "confront" our life with the Word of God. Am I living according to the values underscored in the text? Is there some sin in my heart, or obstructions to the values just perceived?

If *LD* is done in a group, each one should share (as much as possible) what God has spoken to him specifically through this text.

In this step, **God speaks to us personally...**

Third step: PRAYER

How do I respond to the text?

Once we have read and meditated on the text, the moment has arrived to respond to God who has spoken through the text, and also spoken to us personally. Prayer is the "first response", spiritual and intimate, that we give to God in *LD*. This will later be completed with the "second response", practical and concrete, in the fifth step: action.

The question that we now ask ourselves is: **What do I say to God who has spoken to me in the text?**

The response in prayer is very personal and thus can be quite varied. It can be a prayer expressed in our own words (whether spontaneous and oral, or written and more elaborate). We can ask for forgiveness or give thanks, praise the Lord or make a concrete petition, or recite a memorized prayer (such as the Lord's Prayer, the Ave Maria, Rosary, etc.). We can also read a Psalm or another familiar Bible passage. We respond to the Lord in whatever way he has moved in our heart.

If *LD* is done in a group, we can share freely with others what the Lord has awakened within us, or even propose something that would involve all the participants: write a prayer on a blank card to be presented later before a religious image, or take hands and pray together some well-known prayer, or light a small candle and place it in some specific place.

Fourth step: CONTEMPLATION

Silence to take it all in.

Throughout *LD* there will be various moments of silence. But in the fourth step this is a very intentional matter. It is time to make the Word part of our inner being. This is where the earlier steps come together. We are not now simply using our intelligence and will, there are no more questions for thinking and responding. We simply allow ourselves to be inundated by God's presence.