

Word to others through your own lives. *'Did not our hearts burn within us as he walked with us on the road?'* What might we do differently now?

*Gradually over the weeks and months, the Word circulates, nourishing, challenging, and changing the community - we ask ourselves: How does this encounter with the God through the Word change us? What is at the centre of our lives? What is our purpose? What can we do differently?*

### **Leader preparation**

*Suggestions only. You might include some of the following:*

1. Write down as many questions as possible on the texts (not to come up with answers, but to open out the text for yourself).
  - What? Why? When? Where? How? Who?
  - This begins to open up the mind and heart to what is going on through the text
2. Refer to a Biblical Commentary and/or dictionary of the Bible but don't get bogged down. This is simply another voice in the 'conversation', it ought not to dominate, indeed sometimes you may not wish to refer to it at all. (Further resources are given on the leaflet about *Lectionary based Catechesis*)
3. Don't get bogged down reading another persons' thoughts about the text. The text is for you **today**, and will have something fresh and relevant to say to you today — another person's comments may not be at all relevant or helpful. As Leader you are not the 'expert' but the guide.

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*I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.*

Ephesians 1:17-19

One of a series of resources prepared by the Liturgy Office of the Bishops' Conference to accompany the publication of *The Gift of Scripture* a teaching document of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and of Scotland. The document can be downloaded from [www.catholic-ew.org.uk](http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk) and is published by the Catholic Truth Society [[www.cts-online.org.uk](http://www.cts-online.org.uk)]. The Liturgy Office is grateful to Caroline Dollard of the Pastoral Team at Ampleforth Abbey [[www.ampleforth-hpo.org.uk](http://www.ampleforth-hpo.org.uk)] for permission to use her work. Further resources are available from [www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Scripture](http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Scripture). Leaflet ©2005 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. S005

**Liturgy  
Office**  
ENGLAND  
& WALES

# *Praying the Word*

## Lectio Divina & the Sunday Readings

*Let the message of Christ,  
in all its richness,  
find a home with you;  
through him give thanks  
to God the Father*

Colossians 3:16.17

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*A Resource for*  
**THE GIFT OF SCRIPTURE**



## Bible reading for all

A further significant and welcome development of recent times has been the proliferation of groups of people who gather around the Bible, to read and to study, to reflect and to pray. The ancient practice of *lectio divina*, devout reading of Scripture in groups or alone, has gained extraordinary popularity... Wherever people have engaged prayerfully with the Scriptures, their faith has been deepened as a consequence... Each of us can learn to listen to God's word, and discover that God speaks to our hearts as a person speaks to a friend. In times of suffering and sadness, when we feel lost and bewildered, the word of God offers consolation and encouragement.

Gift of Scripture 80

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There are several ways of doing *Lectio Divina*. The following notes are based on work by Caroline Dollard of the Pastoral Team at Ampleforth Abbey.

## *Lectio Divina* - Prayerful Reading of Scripture

*Slowly, tenderly, patiently, open yourself to the encounter with God who loves you. Listen to the voice of One who loves you, listen through the Word, cling to it, cherish it, become a home for it, follow it as you would a sacred pathway, let it lead you deeper and deeper into the mystery. The encounter may affirm, puzzle, challenge, encourage, guide, strengthen, heal, send out.*

You might like to try it this way:

1. **Quieten down.** Relax. Breathe deeply, and then settle your breathing. Be still for few minutes. *'Come Holy Spirit.'*
2. **Read the passage** slowly, deeply (*like a slow walk through a garden, or savouring a special meal*).
3. **Contemplate:** before thinking too much, put the words aside and simply sit in silence again — *As a child at rest in its mother's arms.* Ps 131
4. **Meditation:** begin to engage with the text — read it again slowly, word by word, phrase by phrase, and connect with you life. God-is-with-You. Be open to the encounter with God. What does God say? What new insights, challenge, question, healing... all sorts of gifts for your own needs.

5. **Response** - speak from the heart, whether thanksgiving, petition, sorrow, joy... or without words at all — sitting in silence, a slow walk, or a song. You may wish to write something down - a prayer, a dialogue between yourself and one in the text, a phrase or poem, or draw a picture. Whatever helps you to go deeper.
6. Now this living **Word goes with you**, becomes part of you — take it into your daily life: you carry it with you through the day *'The Lord is with you'*. Let it bubble up to the surface from time to time. At the end of the day, you might like to read and reflect again.

## Group *Lectio Divina*

1. **Decide together** which scripture you first want to pray with from the Sunday Readings — you may have time to pray one or two, or even three of the readings. Confirm the time you have together for this. Talk briefly through the process that will be used so that all are comfortable.
2. Begin in **prayer:** *'O that today we may listen to your voice, harden not our hearts'* or *'Come Holy Spirit'*. Sit in silence for a moment opening yourselves to the presence of God through the Word.
3. One person **reads** the chosen Scripture out loud, slowly.
4. **Allow silence** - simply sit with the Word again.
5. Another person to **read** it out loud again, slowly.
6. **Allow silence** for personal prayerful engagement and encounter through the Word. (About 5 minutes or maybe longer.)
7. After the silence, begin to **read** the text out loud slowly, just one phrase at a time. Pause after each phrase. Allow people the opportunity to say what struck them and why.
8. Continue slowly through - do not get involved in comment, discussion or debate, or historical analysis or study. There are no 'experts' as such in *Lectio*. Though if you have a helpful insight - do share it. What one person shares may well trigger off something in another. This is a simple openness to the living Word: saying simply what struck you, and why. Allow God to connect with your life, and the life of your parish too, through the Word.
9. Finish your time together with another silence — and prayer, thanksgiving, praise, and renewed sense of mission, to bring the