

NEXT TAKE the word or phrase into yourself. Slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories and ideas. Do not be afraid of “distractions.” Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself which, when they rise up during *lectio divina*, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

THEN, SPEAK to God. Whether you use words or ideas or images or all three is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. And give to God what you have discovered in yourself during your experience of *meditatio*.

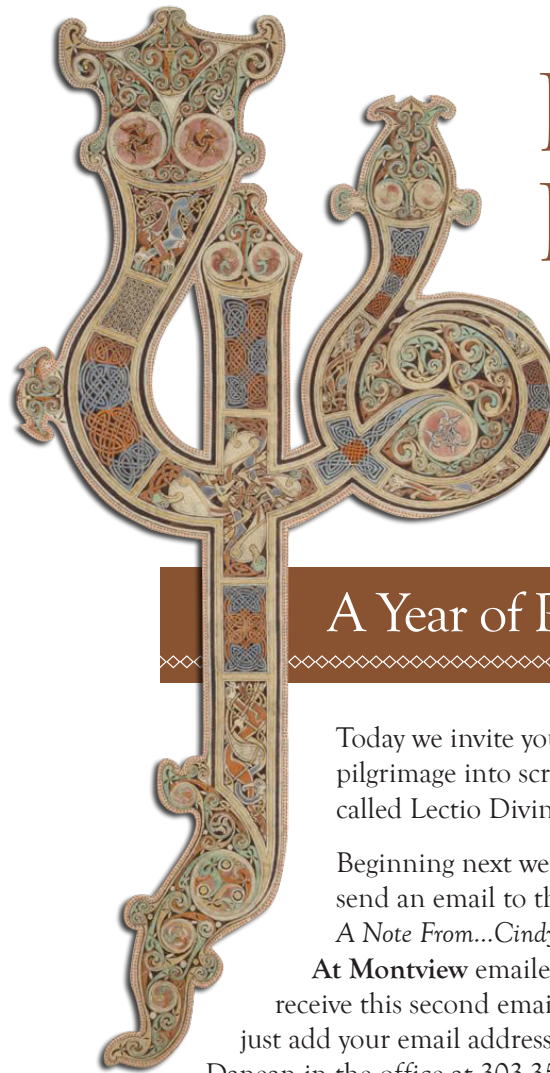
FINALLY, SIMPLY rest in God’s embrace. And when God invites you to return to your pondering of God’s word or to your inner dialogue, do so. Learn to use words when words are helpful, and to let go of words when they no longer are necessary. Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you in both words and silence.

SOMETIMES IN *lectio divina* one will return several times to the printed text, either to savor the literary context of the word or phrase that God has given, or to seek a new word or phrase to ponder. At other times only a single word or phrase will fill the whole time set aside for *lectio divina*. It is not necessary to anxiously assess the quality of one’s *lectio divina* as if one were “performing” or seeking some goal: *lectio divina* has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

LECTIO DIVINA teaches us about the God who truly loves us and it teaches us about ourselves. In *lectio divina* we discover that there is no place in our hearts, no interior corner or closet that cannot be opened and offered to God. God teaches us in *lectio divina* what it means to be a people called to consecrate all of our memories, our hopes and our dreams to Christ.



MONTVIEW BOULEVARD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1980 Dahlia Street, Denver, Colorado 80220-1239
303.355.1651



LECTIO DIVINA

A Year of Praying *with* Scripture

Today we invite you on a new journey – a kind of pilgrimage into scripture using an ancient Christian tool called Lectio Divina or *Sacred Reading*.

Beginning next week and for the rest of the year we will send an email to the congregation every Tuesday entitled *A Note From...Cindy and Ian*. If you currently get **This Week At Montview** emailed to you, then you will automatically receive this second email. If you do not, but would like to, just add your email address to the red attendance pad or contact Danean in the office at 303-355-1651 or burke@montview.org to sign up. As part of this Tuesday email, we will include a few lines of scripture from the text for the following week’s worship service (we’ll also post the email on Montview’s website: www.montview.org). You are invited to pray with these lines of scripture using this ancient form of prayer explained in the following article, adapted from “*Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*” by Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B.

The various groups and committees that meet at Montview during the week will also be invited to begin their meetings in this simple and powerful way. Imagine the collective energy of our community praying with the same words of scripture each week, both individually and together. Our hope is that this brings us closer to God, to the Bible and to each other, while also preparing our hearts for the upcoming Sunday worship.

The *Four Stages of Lectio Devina*

A VERY ANCIENT art, practiced at one time by all Christians, is the technique known as **lectio divina** - a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures which enables the Bible, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God. This ancient practice has been kept alive in the Christian monastic tradition and is being rediscovered in our day.

Lectio - reading/listening

THE ART of **lectio divina** begins with cultivating the ability to listen deeply, to hear “with the ear of our hearts” as St. Benedict encourages in the Prologue to the Rule. If we are constantly speaking or if we are surrounded with noise, we cannot hear gentle sounds. The practice of **lectio divina**, therefore, requires that we first quiet down in order to hear God’s word to us. This is the first step of **lectio divina**, appropriately called **lectio** - reading.

THE READING or listening which is the first step in **lectio divina** is very different from the speed reading which modern Christians apply to newspapers, books and even to the Bible. **Lectio** is reverential listening; listening both in a spirit of silence and of awe. We are listening for the still, small voice of God that will speak to us personally - not loudly, but intimately. In **lectio** we read slowly, attentively, gently listening to hear a word or phrase that is God’s word for us this day.

Meditatio - meditation

ONCE WE have found a word or a passage in the scriptures that speaks to us in a personal way, we must take it in and “ruminate” on it. The image of the ruminant animal quietly chewing its cud was used in antiquity as a symbol of the Christian pondering the Word of God. We take in the word and while gently repeating it to ourselves, allow it to interact with our thoughts, our hopes, our memories, our desires. This is the second step or stage in **lectio divina - meditatio**. Through **meditatio** we allow God’s word to become God’s word for us, a word that touches us and affects us at our deepest levels.

Oratio - prayer

THE THIRD step in **lectio divina** is **oratio** - prayer: prayer understood both as dialogue with God, that is, as loving conversation with the One who has invited us into God’s embrace; and as consecration, prayer as the priestly offering to God of parts of ourselves that we have not previously believed God wants. In this consecration-prayer we allow the word that we have taken in and on which we are pondering to touch and change our deepest selves. God invites us in **lectio divina** to hold up our most difficult and pain-filled experiences and to gently recite over them the healing word or phrase God has given us in our **lectio** and **meditatio**. In this **oratio**, this consecration-prayer, we allow our real selves to be touched and changed by the word of God.

Contemplatio - contemplation

FINALLY, WE simply rest in the presence of God. No one who has ever been in love needs to be reminded that there are moments in loving relationships when words are unnecessary. It is the same in our relationship with God. Wordless, quiet rest in the presence of the One Who loves us has a name in the Christian tradition - **contemplatio**, contemplation.

To Practice Lectio Devina

PLACE YOURSELF in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent. Some Christians focus for a few moments on their breathing; other have a beloved “prayer word” or “prayer phrase” they gently recite in order to become interiorly silent. For some the practice known as “centering prayer” makes a good, brief introduction to **lectio divina**. Use whatever method is best for you and allow yourself to enjoy silence for a few moments.

THEN TURN to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the “still, small voice” of a word or phrase that somehow says, “I am for you today.” Do not expect lightening or ecstasies. In **lectio divina** God is teaching us to listen, to seek God in silence.