

Leading Prayer in Meetings

Enriching our meetings through the use of Lectio Divina prayer

What is Lectio Divina prayer?

- Lectio Divina prayer is an ancient prayer practice that encourages us to slow down with a piece of Scripture, spend time pondering it, and allow the Holy Spirit to speak.
- It is a practice that teaches us to listen to God and one another.
- It is different from a Bible study group, where you might bring history, theology and other ideas together to understand a passage better. This is also good, but it is not the same as resting with a passage and allowing it to speak.
- Sharing with one another is a central part of using this practice in groups as it is very inspiring to hear other people speak about their faith and what has struck them in the passage.

Why do we pray at the beginning of meetings?

We can have a terrible culture of a ‘quick prayer’ at the beginning of meetings, but this is not enough to help us grow as living communities of faith, which is what every decision-making group in the Church should be.

Jesus promises us “where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” *Matt 18.20*

- *When we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit – we remind ourselves that we do everything in the power of the Spirit*
- *Prayer gathers us into the Body of Christ – by spending time praying together, we become a praying community*
- *It gives us time to come into the presence of God – to move from the busy-ness of the day into a holy space*

Role of the Prayer Lead

We suggest that any group wanting to be serious about their prayer life should appoint a prayer lead in addition to a chair or secretary. If leading the prayer is someone’s role, they will take care to choose a good passage and think about the prayer in the context of the group and the agenda.

Why use Lectio Divina prayer to open a meeting?

This form of prayer models the way we are to be with one another:

- *Helping us to practice being open to the Holy Spirit*
- *Becoming comfortable with moments of silence and reflection*
- *Really listening to one another and feeling empowered to speak*
- *Recognising that we do not know everything about a topic and that other people’s contributions surprise us and make us think differently*

These are synodal ways of being together, formed in spiritual conversation.

Steps to a Lectio prayer

1. *Choose a passage of Scripture. This can be from the readings of the day (see universalis.com) or from the web link below in 'other resources'.*
2. *Make sure everyone can see the words – either print out a copy per person, or project the words.*
3. *Begin with silence and ask the Holy Spirit to be with you. It can be as simple as saying "Come Holy Spirit"*
4. *Read the passage through at least twice. Having different voices helps to highlight different words.*
5. *Keep silence between the readings and afterwards. Be aware how people are dealing with the silence.*
6. *Sharing – if a group of more than 6-8, ask people first to share with the person next to them. What word or phrase struck them? Then move to the wider group and ask if anyone would like to share anything with the full group?*

Finish by asking the Father to send the Holy Spirit on your meeting.

Taking prayerfulness into the meeting

1. *Pray over the agenda. Look at the agenda, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you, and ask what is the most important item to reflect on that evening.*
2. *Using silence. When introducing a new item, or asking people to answer a question, bring in a short silence so that people can gather their thoughts. It's fine to jot things down.*
3. *Make sure you hear all the voices – who is not in the room whose voice needs to be heard?*
4. *Hold conflict – when there are two opposing views, both can be heard, but you need to allow people space to speak without someone jumping in. It's good to hear stories at this point, remaining curious and asking "why is that so important for you?"*
5. *Finish with prayer – just a simple Glory Be can be very powerful. Praying for the actions and what happens after the meeting is also a good idea!*

Other forms of prayer

- **Silence** – be aware of the capacity of your group to sit in silence.
- **Intercessions** – pass a candle round and each person can name an intention
- **Pray for your parish, Pastoral Area, organization** – what are the needs?
- **Show a video reflection** – lots on youtube, but watch to the end to make sure!
- **Sing together** - show some videos of worship songs

However, these don't all combine spiritual listening, silence and scripture, so make sure you go back to lectio regularly.

Other Resources

General information on lectio divina soulshepherding.org/lectio-divina-groups

Lovely passages to use at the beginning of meetings, plus lots of other helpful information lindsayboyer.com/lectio-divina-passages