

How to Pray Lectio Divina Tim Glemkowski

Hi, my name is Tim Glemkowski. I'm excited to be with you for this Pray More Novenas Advent Retreat. To be back with you, I should say, because I've been grateful to be able to be a participant in the past as one of the presenters and having received your beautiful feedback from a lot of people who have really benefited from these retreats. I hope it's been a fruitful experience so far, and one that's really serving to enrich and enliven your experience of Advent. So, before we get into our topic, which is Lectio Divina, why don't we pray together?

So, In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Jesus, we ask for you to anoint and bless the experience of all those who are attending this retreat, that it might be a powerful occasion for you to be encountered personally and not just theoretically. But for you to become real to people in a new way, to come close and to help them experience the power and the impact of prayer in a way that leads to an increased faith and an increased joy in you, especially in this crazy time in the world. And we consecrate all of our intentions, our hearts, our needs and our desires to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as we all pray together.

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Great, so, because like I said I want to talk about the topic of Lectio Divina, which is kind of a method or a model of prayer that is one of the church's oldest. It's been, we have records from thousands, over a thousand years ago of people utilizing this methodology of praying with scripture in order to really see a more fruitful prayer life that has them encountering God personally being transformed and changed in prayer. And so, to some, maybe even that idea, a little bit of like, there being a method to prayer might sound strange.

I don't know about you but growing up I actually was blessed to come from like this really good Catholic family where prayer was a big part of the routine of our household. I know not everyone kind of had that which, I was something I'm really grateful for, to have had very devout parents, we would do daily rosaries and Mass on Sundays, of course, prayer before meals. But family prayer was very much so, there are a lot of the devotional books around the house. And so the practice of prayer was something that was always familiar to me.

But in many ways, like, a personal prayer life, or really feeling like I knew how to encounter the Lord with my heart in prayer, and have an intentional and kind of personal routine of prayer that my life was kind of gathered around, for me came somewhat later. And I think in some ways it was because prayer largely was a mystery. I would hear about people who, "I heard this in prayer." Or, "God was, I was kind of praying through these things and this inspiration came to me." Or they seemed to really even just enjoy prayer. And it wasn't very much of a chore. It was something that if they didn't have it on a particular day, they would really miss it. And that whole idea was just kind of alien to me a little bit. If he was like, all right, I can get through the family

Pray More Advent Retreat 2020 - Transcript

rosary, barely, but maybe I'll fall asleep or it might be kind of kicking and screaming a little bit getting into it. But it wasn't till later in life, after I had my own kind of like personal conversion of really encountering Jesus, and trying to give my life to him and kind of live in that relationship, that I found the richness of prayer. And so I think in a particular way we kind of have to start with, before we talk about this method of prayer. Like in a certain sense, like why does prayer have method in the first place?

Is that, it almost seems like it's just should be the kind of thing that we go to, and God kind of shows up and we, there's just fireworks and we're fulfill them. That's, it's kind of not a less embodied way of looking at prayer, I think in some ways. It's like we have to admit that. We started to think of the body and the soul is like different things. And they are, like they're conceptually distinct for sure but here on earth and particularly right until our death like our bodies and our souls are very much so united. Like they're distinguished only conceptually but in reality, like the soul is the form of the body. And so, we are this composite, body, mind and soul, and we pray as body, mind and soul. And so, in a lot of ways, like encountering the richness of prayer is about discipline and technique and growth. Like it's something that we kind of grow into.

Even some of the spiritual leaders were talking about like often it's not until the end of a prayer time. If you put aside 30 minutes to pray we expect to sit down and just be launched into this like deeply meditative prayer. But often it's not till the end of prayer that we start to actually experience some of the fruit of the time and the rest of it, like very much so does it become interacting with our mind and learning to focus our mind and heart on God. So that it's actually fruitful instead of just distracted or frustrating or shallow or not impactful.

And so, for years the spiritual kind of mystics and writers and different people who write in the spiritual life have kind of talked through like, what are some ways of organizing our prayer time so that we can actually like, watch it see impact in our life. Because at the end of the day that's why we pray in the first place, right? It's like the whole idea of the Christian life is that God is, has been He's become close, is the whole idea of Advent, right? Like the nearness of God. And He's not some of this like distant impersonal world force, that's just out there somewhere. And we kind of like meditate to just like reach our kind of like a steady place psychologically or something like that. But the whole idea of prayer is God is real and He can be encountered and that He wants a personal and intimate relationship with us.

And so much like any personal and intimate relationship there's kind of a way you go about relating to that person, right? Like you sit down and if you're just kind of like my wife and I are, just kind of walking past each other in the house and doing chores and watching the kids and we're not ever really connecting or talking we wouldn't get to the end of that day and be like, "Yeah, we really connected today. It was like a great of relational day." We'd feel like a little bit distracted like we hadn't really had time to connect, right?

At the same is true of prayer. Like we can kind of be like, well some people say, "Why I pray all day?" It's like, well, that's good. But if you don't pray intentionally at some point for a definite period of time on a given day then it might be hard for you to feel like you ended the day, you really like connected with God all the way, right? Or it's like, "I pray a couple of minutes before I

Pray More Advent Retreat 2020 - Transcript

go to bed. As I like toss up some of my thoughts on the day." Really, I think one of the fundamental disciplines of starting to follow Jesus with our life is setting aside this time for personal prayer, where we really give space for God to be encountered, and for us to encounter Him. And this is the core reality of prayer. Is that in that encounter, like the personal encounter with God, we never walk away unchanged. Like in this intimate place of meeting the Lord it transforms us slowly over time. So that we start to look more like Him. It's like the more time we're like an old married couple, right? The more time we spend together the more we start looking alike. And in God's own image and likeness kind of gets more and more imprinted on us. So that transformation of life slowly starts taking place, right? It can be both our daily bread, this prayer time that helps us get through difficult times and gives us a deep peace in our life that we can, walk through the difficulties of following Christ in our daily life without being discouraged.

But at the same time, long-term this life of prayer and this life of intimacy that we're growing into becomes a way of being transformed completely. So that heaven comes here to earth, right? Like our experience of heaven, the transformation that will be, what we are in heaven someday is already starting to be present here on earth in our life in a way that sees us becoming a great scene. And so it's kind of prayer in general and why there kind of needs to be technique overall.

And then in a particular way, so the one of these ways of praying that's been especially powerful. And part of the story lineage of the church in terms of prayer is *Lectio Divina* or divine reading, right? That's what that term means in Latin, "divine reading." And it's a way of praying with scripture that actually lets scripture come alive. Because the reality here is that like scripture is the word of God, right? Like if you want to hear God and prayer it's like read the words He already said, right? He put a lot of words down on paper at some point for you to encounter what He thinks about the world and what He thinks about human history, what He thinks about your life, and who He is. Even right, as captured in history, it says that the revelation of Jesus Christ is this revelation of who the father is, right? He says, he's come to reveal the father and he's telling us what God is like and what he thinks, by how He lives and acts.

And so, encountering the words of Jesus and scripture is actually giving us this image of who God is. But at the same time, it says in scripture the word of God is living in effective. So, when we encounter the word it actually has power to change us. And that's kind of why, like there's a lot of great things that we could read in prayer but really praying with scripture is an irreplaceable part of the spiritual life, I think. I think if there's one thing you could do it really, would really be praying with scripture in prayer, right?

I love to go to the adoration chapel nearby and just bring my Bible and that's it. And do this method of *Lectio Divina* in order for those words of scripture which can sometimes seem opaque or difficult or dense and helps them come alive. So that's, I'm going to give you a four-part process for praying with scripture called that *Lectio Divina*. And some people use five parts, some people talk about three parts, but it's all these structures and models for kind of praying with scripture. So four steps or four parts to *Lectio Divina* if you want to bring this to your next prayer time.

So set aside at least 20 minutes to pray and you sit down and you take a passage of scripture. For me, it's usually no more than like a paragraph or a few words. And you first step one, you *Lectio*,

Pray More Advent Retreat 2020 - Transcript

you read. So what I like to do is I just like to read the passage through first, and then I like to sit for a minute and then that's sitting for a minute, often they call it they talk about it as step two, which is Meditatio.

Which is, what I like to know, think about meditatio, meditation you can think of there, it's discursive, it's a movement of the inactive movement of the intellect and the will to start to like wrestle with the words of scripture. But I like to do it more in the sense of like chewing on the words. So it's like read at once and then meditatio and sit and chew and mull on the words. And I liked to almost start to see one or two words or one or two sentences or one or two phrases or ideas start to kind of pop out of me. So Lectio with Meditatio, then I like to go back to the Lectio step. So read the whole passage again and again then meditatio and chew on the words and look for, kind of what phrase or what idea or what sentence is popping out at me.

After that, what you can do, when you're kind of chewing on them, after you chew on them is you can, the step three Oratio, which means to pray, right? And so I'll take those words and I'll reflect them back to God. I'll kind of relate them back to Him and kind of talk about, what do you want me to see here? And what, like, why are you showing me these words? And a lot of people, what they'll do is if it's a story they'll start to see themselves visually in the story and kind of ask God like why He's putting them where He's putting them in the story and who they are and who they're interacting with and what they're doing. And it's this way of kind of like taking that chewing on the word and now relating like kind of the fruit of your chewing back to God and kind of offering it to Him and relating it back to Him. So that He can then further inspire and further speak to you specifically through these words that He's already spoken generally to all of humanity, right?

And after that, Lectio, Meditatio, Oratio prayer. The last step is Contemplatio, contemplation, right? Which means, for me the core idea behind contemplation is to rest. Some of you can be very active in prayer and we can be overactive in prayer. And often, like all that God wants to do is He wants to look at us and let us look at Him and spend time actually resting. We live in this, like this busy world where everything's just like achievement and busy-ness and doing and striving and trying. And there's an incredible stillness that God wants to bring us to, which is really at the heart of prayer.

Like the purpose of Lectio Divina at the end of the day is to get to a place where those words are just soaking in your heart. And you're resting in the powerful word of God which can transform your life, which can renew your strength for a given day at which ultimately is going to be about learning the kind of intimacy with God that He craves with us. So contemplatio, getting to that place of rest where we can just be with the Lord and let Him be with us.

So that's Lectio Divina, that's a four-step process for a guideline for prayer, a method, a technique of prayer that is really going to see us be able to relate to God in a way which is personal and transformative. So, thanks so much for watching my talk, and may God bless you richly this advent season, God bless.