

THE REGISTER'S NEW CLIP-OUT, PHOTOCOPY AND PASS-ON GUIDES FOR ADVENT

Lectio Divina for Advent

BY CLAIRE DWYER

What Is the Liturgical Year?

The liturgical year is the clock by which we should "set" our spiritual practices and our prayer. Through six sacred seasons, it invites us into the Church's cyclical unfolding of the mystery of salvation history in order to make it more fully our own. One way to enter more deeply into the flow of the liturgical year is by praying with the Mass readings each day, using a practice called *lectio divina*. *Lectio divina* can be practiced with any Scripture reading, but praying with the daily readings or Sunday Gospel keeps us connected to the universal celebration of the Eucharist in the Holy Mass. "The *lectio divina*, where the word of God is so read and meditated that it becomes prayer, is thus rooted in the liturgical celebration" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1177).



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"Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." - St. Jerome



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The Time Is Now

Advent is a perfect time to begin this "ever ancient, ever new" form of prayer because it begins the liturgical year. The Catechism tells us that especially during Advent, the Church "rereads and relives the great events of salvation history in the 'today' of her liturgy" (1095). Therefore it is a beautiful way to prepare ourselves for Christmas, as the readings each day walk us closer and closer to the coming of Christ — pointing to him just like the Star of Bethlehem.

What Is *Lectio Divina*?

Lectio divina is Latin for "divine reading." It refers to an ancient form of prayerful and reflective reading of Scripture that is as old as Scripture itself and was formalized by the Carthusian monk Guigo in the 12th century. In his famous letter, "The Ladder of Monks," he describes four steps of spiritual reading: *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (meditation), *oratio* (prayer) and *contemplatio* (contemplation).



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"Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32)

How

Dan Burke, president and chief operating officer of EWTN News Inc., offers a "how-to" in his book *Into the Deep* (used with permission; *Into the Deep: Finding Peace Through Prayer* is available via EWTNRC.com or by calling 800-854-6316).

Today, we can summarize it this way:

Step 1: Reading — an attentive, slow, leisurely and repetitious reading of a short passage of the Bible.

Key questions: What does the Bible say in the text itself? What did the author intend? What does the Church teach about the subject?

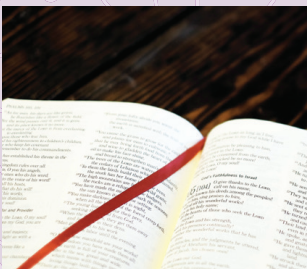


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Step 2: Reflecting — prayerfully engaging with the meaning of the passage and considering how it may apply to your circumstances.

Key questions: What does the text say to me? How does it apply to my life? Where is God leading me? What is he revealing to me?



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Step 3: Responding — conversing with God about the passage.

Key questions: What can I say in response to God? Should I offer thanksgiving or praise or should I ask for help in any particular way?

Step 4: Resting — allowing yourself to rest and remain absorbed in the words of God, allowing or inviting the Holy Spirit to draw you more deeply into his presence through what you have read.

Key questions: Am I being patient, attentive and open to God's movement in my soul as I rest in his self-revelation?

Step 5: Resolving — allowing the encounter with God to permeate your day, causing you to draw ever nearer to him through his self-revelation and invitation to participate with him in making his presence known in the world.

Key questions: What can I specifically do to respond to what God has revealed to me in this passage? How can I carry this encounter with me into the day to influence how I think and act?

"For the word of God is living and active."
— Hebrews 4:12

When

It is important to commit to time for prayer every day, even if it's just for 10 or 15 minutes. The best time is almost always in the morning, before all other activities compete for our attention. Getting up a little earlier will pay off with spiritual rewards throughout the day! Try giving God the first fruits of your day.

Where

Find a place in your home that you can set aside as sacred. A tabletop, a quiet corner, a shelf — just a few inches for a holy image and a candle is a perfect start. When this small space is used only for prayer, you will find that just by entering into it, you will begin to ready your heart and mind to pray.



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"The force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life." — Dei Verbum, 21

Blessings of a Holy Hour

BY CLAIRE DWYER

A Beautiful Advent Devotion

"The Eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life'" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1324). Our worship of our Eucharistic Lord, Jesus — fully and completely present under the consecrated species of bread and wine — continues outside of the celebration of Mass when the sacred Hosts are reserved in the tabernacle or exposed for veneration, such as in an adoration chapel for a special Holy Hour.



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It is a wonderful practice to begin making a Holy Hour, perhaps once a week, during this time of Advent. Spend time with Jesus, who came to us on Christmas and remains with us even now in the Blessed Sacrament.

"The purpose of the Holy Hour is to encourage deep personal encounter with Christ. The holy and glorious God is constantly inviting us to come to him, to hold converse with him, to ask for such things as we need and to experience what a blessing there is in fellowship with him."

— Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

How to Make a Holy Hour

It doesn't have to be complicated!

1. Upon entering the Church, **bleed yourself** with holy water and genuflect in front of the tabernacle or monstrance, acknowledging Jesus truly present in the Eucharist.

There is no single formula for making a Holy Hour, but here are some suggestions:



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2. Take time to **enter into the presence of God** by quieting your heart and mind. Recall who is present with you: Jesus Christ, God-made-man, in his divinity and his humanity, body and soul. Allow yourself to be filled with wonder and adoration.

3. Spend a few minutes **thanking God** for his blessings, recalling his gifts: your life, your vocation, your family, his love for you and his provision for you. Recall in a special way the gift of himself in the Eucharist, the treasure of remaining on earth with us in the sacred Host.

4. Devote some time to **petition**. The greatest grace he desires for you is the salvation of your soul and the souls of others, but also bring to him all of your needs — nothing is too small to be outside of his concern. "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will" (Matthew 10:29).

5. Prayers of **atonement** are a beautiful way to express sorrow for not only our personal sins, but the sins of the Church, all sins against God, against life and against neighbor, and for all offenses against the Blessed Sacrament. **The Divine Mercy Chaplet** is a powerful prayer of atonement.

6. Sometimes just being in God's presence is enough. Allow his peace to enter your soul. Listen to what he may be saying to you: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10). But if you find your mind wandering, it is a good idea to be prepared with some **spiritual reading or formal prayers**, such as the: *Holy Rosary*, to ponder the mysteries of the life of Christ with *Mary and Litany of the Most Blessed Sacrament*; plus, reading *Scripture*, especially the *daily Mass readings*, and good *spiritual reading*, such as the *lives of the saints or writings of the saints*.



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7. Finally, take a few moments to **thank God** for the gift of himself in the Eucharist and the graces received during the Holy Hour. Ask him to continue his blessings throughout your day and week.

8. **Leave as you entered**, genuflecting quietly before the Blessed Sacrament and blessing yourself with holy water.

"In the course of the day, the faithful should not omit to visit the Blessed Sacrament, which, according to the liturgical laws, must be kept in the churches with great reverence in a most honorable location. Such visits are a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, an acknowledgment of the Lord's presence." — Pope St. Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*



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Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from Christ's side, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within thy wounds, hide me.
Suffer me not to be separated from thee.
From the malicious enemy, defend me.
In the hour of my death, call me
And bid me come unto thee,
That I may praise thee with thy saints
and with thy angels,
Forever and ever.
Amen.

Source: EWTN.com/devotionals/prayers/anima2.htm