

Lectio Divina in Creation

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis shares that “Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. (LS 12)

One way to do this is through the ancient Christian practice of *lectio divina* or slow, contemplative praying of Scriptures. In this traditional practice, one often first reads the text (*lectio*), meditates on a word or phrase (*meditatio*), and prays (*oratio*) with a question or insight that might arise. Finally, through the grace of God, one might be lead into contemplation (*contemplatio*) of simply resting in God's presence.

Saint Augustine and Saint Bonaventure teach us that God reveals himself through two books: Sacred Scripture and Creation. Remembering the teachings of these Doctors of the Church, we propose that our “text” be the book of Creation for this *Lectio Divina*. This can be done by going outside, whether on a walk or sitting outside one's home, or if that is not possible by doing it inside, whether by looking outside the window or meditating with a plant. You can also pray with a place in nature using your imagination.

Read/Lectio. To use this process of lectio divina in creation, take time to “read” creation by just walking or looking around slowly taking in with all of your senses what is around you. Notice the different colors, shapes, smells, textures, sounds.

Meditate/Meditatio. Notice if something attracts your attention and allow yourself to linger there. It might be a flower, a tree, or cloud formations in the sky. Allow yourself to be present to what is there. Use your senses to take in the wonder of this creature or element of creation. Reflect on how you experience God's presence within or through this element of creation.

Pray/Oratio. Enter into dialogue with God or this creature, as a reflection of God's presence. You might ask a question such as “What God are you saying to me through this tree?” Or you might just give God thanks for the beauty of this creation. Then allow yourself to listen. Allow yourself to be open to what God might be saying to you through creation. Don't worry if you don't hear anything. Just be open to what might arise, without needing to force anything.

Contemplate/Contemplatio. After some time, let go of any words or thoughts and just allow yourself to rest in God's presence right here and now. You might close your eyes and simply relax.

When you are ready to close your time of prayer, find a way to give thanks: by silently, offering a prayer to God, by making a slight gesture of gratitude like a bow, or wishing your friend in creation well-being and health. Then close by saying an Our Father or the Prayer for our Earth found in Laudato Si'.