

Lectio divina

By [Diane Roth](#)

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Thursday morning, I drove over to a neighboring parish to participate in Lectio Divina for the first time.

I don't know why I haven't done it before. In the back of my mind, I knew that the pastor hosted a Lectio group for a few years. And for at least a few years, I've wanted to learn more about divine reading.

I've collected information. I've ordered books. I've talked to people about it. I've imagined it. I had a teacher from the Benedictine Center in St. Paul come to do adult forums twice at my church. But I was never able to attend them, because we have a worship service at the same time. I also get all of the update from St. Paul's Monastery and dream about doing a retreat or a class.

But until Thursday, I've never participated in Lectio Divina.

There were just six of us, sitting in a circle, with a lit candle, the gospel of Matthew, and a set of chimes. We prayed. We read and listened for what emerged for each of us, each saying a few words. We read again and listened with imagination. We read a third time for prayer. There was also twenty minutes of Centering Prayer, another thing I have never participated in before.

I won't say that the silence was always easy, or that I never felt my mind wander. I became acutely aware, in the silence, of how I am always racing ahead, always making lists in my mind, always thinking about what I should do next, who I should call next, trying to solve problems in my mind.

We read Matthew 16, Peter's confession, and I heard the phrase "book-learning" and the words "Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you." I imagined the dusty road where Jesus turned to his disciples and

asked, "But who do you say that I am?" and thought I heard in his voice the vulnerability of someone who was not sure what the answer would be. I felt the hardness of Rock, and the keys of the kingdom, the keys that open the door to wide mercy and love and grace. I heard other prayers and other insights in small phrases that washed over me.

For a moment, I thought I ought to preach on the gospel instead of Romans 12 (my plan), and then I thought again.

Every time I read scripture, it does not need to be in preparation for a sermon.

It's good to carve out a space to hear God, to listen for God's voice, without so many pre-conceived ideas about what God will say. It's good to remember that my life is not just about the lists I make, the things I do, or try to do, the problems I solve, or try to solve, or fail to solve.

On Thursday, I felt the keys to the kingdom when I entered the circle and just listened and heard a story from Matthew's gospel.

I'll go again.

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