



Diocesan Spiritual Renewal Programme



Leader's Guide

"As we build new buildings and strengthen old ones, may we also experience the deeper renewal of ourselves as the Body of Christ. Strengthen us in faith; renew us in your love; give us an unbreakable hope in your promise of eternal life."

Diocesan Prayer for Renewal

What:

Every group in the Diocese, between Ash Wednesday and Pentecost Sunday, is invited to have two extended sessions of prayer (30-60 minutes) based on the lectio divina model (see below) using resources produced by the Diocesan Pastoral Office. This can happen at either a normal or special meeting. Other groups may also form within parish or school communities to enable everybody to take part who wishes to.

**Why?**

These sessions of prayer are designed:

- To encourage people to think and pray about Spiritual Renewal in the Diocese, particularly focusing on the theme below.
- To enable people, through the reflection on scripture, to focus on the mission of the church.
- To encourage groups to view all their activities through the lens of our theme.
- To invite people to focus on what it means for them in their circumstances of parish, work and home to be missionary disciples proclaiming the Good News of Jesus to the world.
- To keep people praying for our new bishop.

Diocesan Theme:

The Catholic Diocese of Christchurch is a community of missionary disciples who love God, love each other, and go out to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the World.

How?

The prayer sessions will be based on the lectio divina model of prayer. Lectio divina “is a Latin term meaning ‘reading with God’” and is a form of prayer which is based on reading and reflecting on passages of scripture. It can be done individually or in groups. The suggested steps for leading a lectio divina session are outlined over the page. This form of prayer “gently leads us into a deeper relationship with Christ”¹.

Each group will choose a time when they will do this. They will follow the process set out in a reflection sheet which will be sent out to you. At the conclusion of the first prayer session, everybody will be given a reflection sheet to take home. There will then be a second group prayer session with another reflection sheet containing a different scripture and different reflection questions. There will then be the opportunity to give feedback to the Diocesan Bishop.

It is hoped that this period of prayer will be the catalyst for a greater spiritual renewal for the diocese. It will also be a great gift for the new bishop when he is appointed.

1) The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Lectio Divina Prayer Card

The Steps of Lectio Divina:

1. **Begin the prayer session with an opening prayer;** invite the Holy Spirit to come and help clear away anything that will hinder us from hearing the Word of God, give us the courage to open our hearts, and to listen to the word and to respond. You might like to pray the prayer written for this programme contained in the separate reflection sheet.

2. **Choose one of the scriptures and read it out loud.** Invite people to simply listen rather than follow along on their sheets - the word is meant to be listened to.

3. **Five minutes silence** – as you begin this silence ask the group to see whether there is a word or phrase that stands out to them. You may wish to use the words from the reflection sheet: *“Jesus is sharing these thoughts with his friends in a real lived moment. Be conscious of a real moment in my life as I listen/read/reflect and allow a single word or phrase speak to me. Humbly allow the Holy Spirit to do his work within me.”*

4. At the conclusion of the five minutes, **invite each member of the group to share the word or phrase that touched their hearts.** There is to be no further discussion at this time.

5. **Read the same scripture again** out loud with another reader of a different gender if possible.

6. **Five minutes further silence** – ask the group to reflect silently on why this word touched their heart. *“Let the word or phrase penetrate my heart, feelings, conscience or life experience”. What is the Lord saying to you? What is he asking of you?*

7. **Invite each member of the group to again share the word or phrase in the group.** Invite them to share why that particular word touched their heart in a time of general faith sharing.

8. **Give everybody the chance to share.** This is a time of faith sharing so everybody's thoughts are valid. It is perfectly ok if people don't want to share. During this time, using the reflection sheet provided, ask the group to reflect and share on the questions posed.

9. **Close with a time of prayer.** Give people the chance to rest peacefully in the presence of the Lord. Ask them to ponder these beautiful words below which are also set out in the reflection sheet.

During this time of lectio – we make a personal heartfelt response to God speaking the Word to us.

If we experience our weakness and need, respond by asking his help.

If we experience the word as a promise, respond with joyful trust.

If we experience our sinfulness, respond with repentance.

If we experience being called to action, respond with willing generosity.

If we experience the word as a challenge, ask for courage to accept it.

10. **During this closing prayer time** ask people to form the word or phrase that they have received into a direct prayer to our Lord, either out loud or within their hearts. Encourage the group members to thank the Lord for the personal word spoken to their heart. You might like to conclude the prayer session with the closing prayer set out in the reflection sheet.

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Reflect on Lectio Divina

Lectio (reading): read the passage of Scripture slowly, more than once. If a particular word, phrase or sentence seems significant (even if you don't know why), you may want to write it down.



Meditatio (reflection): let the significant words fill your mind without straining to analyse them. You are in God's presence and so let the Holy Spirit lead your understanding of the words.

Oratio (prayer): allow your heart to speak to God, in words inspired by the passage of Scripture or by the thoughts that have come to you while reflecting on it.

Contemplatio (rest): let go of ideas and words and allow yourself to rest in the presence of God in simple and wordless contemplation.

Quotes on Lectio Divina from Pope Benedict XVI, Saint Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis

"I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of Lectio divina: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart. If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church ... a new spiritual springtime".



Pope Benedict XVI. (2005). Address to the International Congress on Dei Verbum.

"It is especially necessary that listening to the word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid tradition of lectio divina, which draws from the biblical text the living word which questions, directs and shapes our lives".

Pope John Paul II. (2001). Novo Millennio Ineunte.

"There is one particular way of listening to what the Lord wishes to tell us in his word and of letting ourselves be transformed by the Spirit. It is what we call lectio divina. It consists of reading God's word in a moment of prayer and allowing it to enlighten and renew us. **Pope Francis. (2014). Evangelii Gaudium.**



"In his Letter to Gregory, the great Alexandrian theologian gave this advice: "Devote yourself to the lectio of the divine Scriptures; apply yourself to this with perseverance. Do your reading with the intent of believing in and pleasing God. If during the lectio you encounter a closed door, knock and it will be opened to you by that guardian of whom Jesus said, 'The gatekeeper will open it for him'. By applying yourself in this way to lectio divina, search diligently and with unshakable trust in God for the meaning of the divine Scriptures, which is hidden in great fullness within. You ought not, however, to be satisfied merely with knocking and seeking: to understand the things of God, what is absolutely necessary is oratio. For this reason, the Saviour told us not only: 'Seek and you will find', and 'Knock and it shall be opened to you', but also added, 'Ask and you shall receive'". **Pope Benedict XVI. (2010). Verbum Domini.**