**Dwelling in the word through**

**Lectio Divina**

One of the most central and ancient practices of Christian prayer is praying the scriptures (lectio divinia, or “divine reading”). When we pray the scriptures, we begin by reading a few verses of the Bible. We read unhurridly so that we can listen for the message God has for us there. We stay alert to connections the Spirit may reveal between the passage and what is going on in our lives. We ask, “What are you sayin to me today, Lord? What am I to hear in this story, parable, or prophecy?” Listening in this way requires patience and a willingness to let go of our own agendas and open ourselves to God’s shaping.

Once we have heard a word that we know is meant for us, we are naturally drawn to prayer. From lsitening we move to speaking—perhaps in anguish, confession, or sorrow; perhaps in joy, praise, thanksigving, or adoration; perhaps in anger, confusion, or hurt; perhaps in quiet confidence, trust, or surrender. Finally, after pouring out our hearts to God, we come to rest simply and deeply in that wonderful, loving presence of God. Reading, reflecting, responding, and resting—this is the basic rhythm of divine reading.

**Try it!**

Pick out a portion of scripture and make some time for quiet. You’ll read the verse three times, listening for a different thing each time. *For practicing this in class, it may be good to have everyone use the same scripture and have some of the times through be read aloud*.

1. As you read the scripture the first time, listen for the word or phrase that leaps out at you. What word or phrase calls to you or sticks in your memory? As you hear the word, gently take it into your heart and silently recite or ponder the word during the silence.
2. As you read the text a second time, meditate on the word or phrase that speaks to you. Let it interact with your thoughts, your hopes, your memories. Consider how the word or phrase is touching your life today.
3. As you read the text this last time, consider how God is calling you forth into doing or being through the scripture. Allow God to use these words to touch you, shape you in your life today. Before you return to your activities, spend a few more moments in prayer and meditation. If you keep a journal, make some notes about this time apart. When you are finished, go in God’s peace and love.