

Group Lectio Divina

1. Confirm the time that the group will be spending together at this meeting. Talk briefly through the process that will be used so that all are comfortable.
2. Begin in prayer: 'O that today we may listen to your voice, harden not our hearts' or 'Come Holy Spirit'. Sit in silence for a moment opening yourselves to the presence of God through the Word.
3. One person reads the chosen Scripture out loud, slowly.
4. Allow silence - simply sit with the Word again. (5-10 minutes)
5. Another person to read the Scripture out loud again, slowly.
6. After a brief silence, invite members of the group to share a word, phrase or sentence that has struck them. Pause after each phrase.
7. The facilitator provides a background briefing on 'the text on its own ground' using reliable and trustworthy materials. The facilitator offers this information in narrative or experiential style, as a fellow believer, not as a guest expert. This stage may threaten, challenge or affirm the initial impressions of stage 6.
8. After a brief silence again read the passage out loud, slowly.
9. After a further brief silence, invite members of the group to share a word, phrase or sentence that has struck them and, this time, to explain why. In their observations the members of the group allow their personal and communal stories to dialogue with the biblical drama. The group goes beyond the initial impressions and asks 'How are we and our initial responses affirmed or challenged by what we have heard about the scripture? How might we affirm or challenge and go beyond the biblical meanings? What are the "so whats"?'.
10. Bring the meeting to an end with either a brief time of intercessory prayer, or with the Lord's Prayer.

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Leading a Scripture Prayer Group is one of a series of resources prepared by the Liturgy Commission to support the continuing formation of liturgical ministers in Westminster diocese. Other resources can be downloaded from www.rcdow.org.uk/liturgy

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Leading a Scripture prayer group

An introduction for Readers
and other ministers of the Word
in Westminster Diocese

Introduction

This leaflet is to assist readers, catechists and others to consider how to go about arranging a Scripture Prayer Group in their parish.

Who is the group for?

This sort of a group is for any one able to accept the discipline of using the group for prayer and reflection, and able to refrain from trying to use it as a discussion group. There are advantages in the group being formed from people having involvement in a variety of different aspects of parish life.

Is it for prayer or study?

It is not realistic to have a group that meets and gives equal attention to both prayer and formal study of the scriptures. At the same time neither is it desirable for a group of believers to meet only to pray with the Scriptures or only to study them. This leaflet assumes that the primary focus of the group's activity is praying together with the Scriptures. However it will be seen that there is also the opportunity to benefit from the fruits of some Scripture study also.

Personal engagement

The structure of the meetings of the group gives a priority to the insights of each member of the group as they listen to the word of God. Members are invited to share their own insights, and a special place is given for input reflecting the insights of Catholic scholars on the Scriptures. However what is avoided is discussion of the Scriptures or people's insights. The meeting of the group provides time for individuals to reflect both on what impresses they themselves and other members of the group, rather than to engage in debate and discussion.

Practicalities

- **Size of the Group**
It will be difficult for the group to operate effectively if numbers rise much above six to eight.
- **Length of meeting**
A meeting will generally last between sixty or ninety minutes.
- **Regularity of meeting**

There are advantages in meeting weekly, but this may make excessive demands on some members of the group. A decision on frequency of meeting should take into account what value is put on the whole group coming together for each meeting.

- **The Scripture text(s)** Some groups choose to pray their way through a book of scripture over several months. Others prefer to make use of the Sunday Lectionary. Such groups have to decide which reading or readings to use. It is generally better to use only a single reading. Plan in advance which reading you wish to use. It may be most helpful to use one of the semi-continuous readings - in Ordinary Time these are the second and the gospel reading.

Leadership

The principle role of the leader/facilitator is to help the group remain true to the established process, and to provide the particular input proposed in step 7 below. It may be helpful for group members to take it in turns to exercise this role.

It may also be helpful to separate the roles of 'leader' and 'facilitator' to share these responsibilities. The Leader takes responsibility for the practical arrangements of the group (including timekeeping) and the facilitator takes responsibility for preparing the background briefing described in step 7 below.

Facilitator preparation

The following are offered as suggestions only. Feel free to adapt and develop these proposals as seems to suit the interests and needs of the group.

1. Write down as many questions as possible on the texts (not to come up with answers, but to open out the text for yourself). Ask: *What? Why? When? Where? How? Who?* This begins to open up the mind and heart to what is going on through the text
2. Refer to a Biblical Commentary and/or dictionary of the Bible but don't get bogged down. This is simply another voice in the 'conversation', it ought not to dominate. Remember, as Facilitator you are not the 'expert' but the guide. (Further resources are given in the Liturgy Office leaflet on Lectionary based Catechesis - www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources)