

Benedictine Prayer

For All Personality Types

This form of prayer, called “sacred reading” (*lectio divina* in Latin), is one of the oldest and most popular forms of prayer and is suitable for all basic personality types.

PREPARATION

As with other types of prayer, choose a time of day when you will be well rested, alert, and as free as possible of distractions and outside pressure. Find a place that is quiet and restful, comfortable, and conducive of giving your full attention to God.

Before your time of prayer, perhaps even on the previous day, choose a passage of scripture or some other spiritual reading that is appropriate to your needs. You may simply turn to a passage you already know or one from a prayer guide. Or you may begin with any large block of scripture, reading it slowly until you center on a particular word, verse, story, or idea that draws you.

STEP 1: READING—*Lectio*

Read the text slowly several times, trying to savor each word and phrase, making sure that you come to a good understanding of what the text is saying. Sometimes it helps to read the text aloud.

STEP 2: MEDITATION—*Meditatio*

Spend some time reflecting upon the text. Try to personalize it so that it speaks to your own particular needs. It is helpful to have a notebook handy in which you can write your insights and reflections. After making your notes, reread them and reflect upon them, writing down new insights as they occur. From time to time, go back to the text and reread it to discover if there is something new for you there. If you find something new, record that in your notebook and again reread the rest of the material that you have written.

STEP 3: PRAYER—*Oratio*

This is time for your response to God. It can be easily intermingled with the meditation (step 2) so that together these two steps become a dialogue between you and God. God speaks to you; you respond with gratitude, love, petition, contrition, praise, sorrow, joy, commitment, or dedication – or whatever form your response may take. Your response may not be in words at all; it may be in feelings or emotions. There may be times when your reaction seems shallow or nonexistent. However, the intention and the effort are what count, and the time you spend will not be wasted.

STEP 4: CONTEMPLATION—*Contemplatio*

In this step, give God ample time to be revealed to you. God’s pace and schedule is always out of your hands, and God can never be hurried. Now is the time to wait and hope for whatever graces God might send your way. You may not be aware that anything is happening, but always trust that God’s grace works in the depths. This step may carry over from the period you have set aside for prayer into whatever follows in your day. It is a time to be aware, open, and receptive.

Until you become familiar with this form of prayer, you will probably find it helpful to follow the steps as they are listed here. Later you may follow them in any order that comes naturally to you, and you may easily go from one to another and back again. Allow yourself complete freedom in the order and variety of these steps during your time of prayer. And do include writing; it will be a great aid in your prayer and a valuable record of your journey with God.