

# Praying with Scripture

## Core Activity

### *Lectio Divina*

1. Conduct a brief presentation about Scripture and prayer, using the information from the sections “Faith, Hope, and Love” and “The Living Word,” on pages 394–396 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)*.



2. Divide the class into small groups, provide each group with a Bible, and give each student the handout “The Four Rs of Praying with Scripture” (Document #: TX003209). Ask each group to designate a leader. Explain that the leader’s role will be to proclaim a Scripture passage to the group when prompted to do so. Assign each group one of the following scriptural texts:

- Gen., chap. 1 (God creates the world.)
- Exod. 16:4–15 (God sends food to the Israelites.)
- Psalm 139 (God knows us.)
- Luke 6:37–42 (Do not judge other people.)
- John 8:2–11 (A woman is caught in adultery.)
- Rom. 8:31–39 (Nothing can separate us from God’s love.)

3. Using material from pages 398–400 of the *CFH* and the information on the handout, describe for the students the process known as *lectio divina*.

4. Have the small groups try *lectio divina* while you lead them through the process as follows:

1. Tell the group leaders to read the designated Scripture passages aloud clearly, slowly, and distinctly.
2. After a moment of quiet, instruct the leaders to read the passages again, clearly, slowly, and distinctly. After the second reading, invite the students to answer one of the questions from the “Reflect” section of the handout and invite them to share their reflections with their groups.
3. Instruct the leaders to read their passages again, and have the students answer the question, “Now that I have a better understanding of the passage, what does it make me want to pray for?” Invite the students to share their prayers.
4. Direct the students to sit quietly for a few moments. As best as possible, they are to empty their minds of thoughts. They may focus on a religious image, such as a crucifix, if one is available. They are to pay attention to their feelings and to any sudden thoughts that occur to them. During this time of silent reflection, you can ask them to write a journal response to the question, “What does God say back to me?”

Conclude the *lectio divina* process with each person silently praying for all the members of the group to be moved to action by their prayers and to respond to God.

5. Discuss questions such as the ones that follow:
  - How was this process for you? Was it helpful?
  - Did your experience or interpretation of the scriptural text change throughout the process? If so, how?
  - What would be the value of incorporating *lectio divina* into your regular prayer routine?

6. Finally note that the content of this activity as well as the *lectio divina* process can be found in chapter 36 of the *CFH*. Encourage the students to read and review it in the next few days, and to refer to the process provided in the *CFH* when they wish to pray the *lectio divina* individually or communally.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Prayer manual*.)

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## Core Activity Extension

### A Scripture Collection

As homework ask the students each to find a favorite passage from Scripture. Tell them to copy the passage onto an index card and to provide a short reflection on why the text has meaning for them. Compile the information anonymously into a booklet and make it available to the class as a prayer book. You might also involve family members by having the students ask their parents and siblings to provide cards about their favorite Bible verses. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Prayer manual*.)

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## Additional Activities

### A Scriptural Prayer List

1. Divide your class into groups of four or five students. Give a Bible to each group and designate someone in each group to serve as the recorder. Ask each group to brainstorm three or four issues that most teenagers struggle with. Examples are doubt, forgiveness, worry, love, responsibility, and self-image. Once the groups have chosen topics, ask the recorders to write them in a place visible to the entire class.

2. Announce that the groups' task now is to conduct a search for a scriptural text that addresses each issue they have named. For example, if the topic is worrying, a good scriptural text is James 1:5–8. Tell the students that the index in their Bibles will direct them to Scripture passages. If possible have a few concordances and other reference materials on hand as additional resources. Allow 10–15 minutes for the groups to conduct their searches. Each should note the correlating text next to the issue identified and displayed for the class.

3. Make copies of the list of topics and Scripture verses for your students, and encourage them to refer to the list when particular issues concern them. If possible take time in future classes to read and reflect on the topics and Scripture verses with your students.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Prayer manual*.)

## Songs for Every Need

1. List the following categories of psalms on the board, on newsprint, or on an overhead:

- praise psalms
- wisdom psalms
- royal psalms
- thanksgiving psalms
- lamentation psalms

2. Ask the students to pair up. Assign each pair five psalms. It is not necessary to cover all the Psalms. You may consider assigning psalms that are familiar to your students through the Sunday readings.

3. Direct your students to look over the categories of psalms you listed on the board and to describe the kinds of songs found in the Book of Psalms. Look for responses like these:

- Praise psalms give glory to God.
- Wisdom psalms offer guides for human conduct.
- Royal psalms ask God's guidance for leaders.
- Thanksgiving psalms express gratitude for blessings.
- Lamentation psalms cry out in woe and misfortune.

4. Ask the students to read with their partners the psalms they were assigned and find examples of each theme listed on the board. After everyone has had a chance to study their psalms, invite them to read aloud a few verses that express each theme.

(This activity is adapted from Maryann Hakowski, *Teaching Manual for "PrayerWays,"* pp. 99–100.)

## Scriptural Mottos

Have your students read the Did You Know? article "Scriptural Mottos," on page 401 of the *CFH*. Ask the students each to find, in the Bible, a motto or phrase that they feel is a good guide for their lives and inspires their actions. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Prayer manual*.)

(The material labeled *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer* or *TC: Prayer* is from *Total Catechesis: Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*, by Mary Shrader and Laurie Delgatto, in the Total Catechesis series [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004]. Copyright © 2004 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.

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