

Pope offers step-by-step guide on how 'lectio divina' meditation works

VATICAN CITY – In his post-synodal document on the Word of God, Pope Benedict XVI urged all Christians to get to know the sacred Scriptures better.

He gave a few suggestions that included having a Bible in every home and engaging in a more attentive, prayerful listening to Gospel readings.

The pope paid particular attention to the importance and efficacy of "lectio divina," a form of prayerful meditation on the word of God, and he offered a step-by-step guide on the practice.

The post-synodal apostolic exhortation, "Verbum Domini" ("The Word of the Lord"), was released Nov. 11.

The pope said the first step is to open with a reading ("lectio") of a text, "which leads to a desire to understand its true context: What does the biblical text say in itself?"

Understanding what the text is trying to say is important so as to move beyond one's own notions and ideas, he said.

"Next comes meditation ('meditatio'), which asks: what does the biblical text say to us?" the pope wrote.

Christians both as individuals and as a community need to let themselves be "moved and challenged" by what the sacred text is telling them, he wrote.

"Following this comes prayer ('oratio'), which asks the question: what do we say to the Lord in response to his word?" wrote the pope.

Prayer is critical for hearts and minds to be transformed, he wrote.

"Finally, 'lectio divina' concludes with contemplation ('contemplatio'), during which we take up, as a gift from God, his own way of seeing and judging reality, and ask

ourselves what conversion of mind, heart and life is the Lord asking of us?" he wrote.

God asks everyone not to conform themselves to the world, but to be transformed by conversion, he wrote.

Contemplation and reflection let the mind consider reality as God sees it and help foster within oneself "the mind of Christ," the papal document said.

"The process of 'lectio divina' is not concluded until it arrives at action ('actio'), which moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity," said the pope.

The pope said in his document that the monastic tradition of "lectio divina" is "truly capable of opening up to the faithful the treasures of God's word, but also of bringing about an encounter with Christ, the living word of God."