



ART and PRAYER

Lectio Divina

As Catholics, we treasure *Lectio Divina*—the ancient way of praying slowly with Scripture. Visio Divina flows from that same tradition. If Lectio is “divine reading,” Visio is “divine seeing.” It is prayer through sacred images.

The monastic tradition shaped by St. Benedict emphasized slow, attentive prayer with Scripture, and over time the Church also prayed through icons, stained glass, and sacred art—especially when many believers could not read.

Connection to Catholic Devotional Life

Visio Divina pairs beautifully with:

- Eucharistic Adoration
- The Rosary
- Stations of the Cross
- Marian devotion

For example:

When we pray the Rosary, we already meditate visually on the mysteries of Christ’s life with Mary, Mother of Jesus. Visio Divina is similar—it invites us to linger with one sacred moment.

Use images of the events in Jesus’ life.

- **Lectio (Read):** Read a short Bible passage (5–10 verses) slowly, perhaps aloud. Listen for a word or phrase that strikes you.
- **Meditatio (Reflect):** Read the passage again. Linger over that word or phrase. Reflect on what God is saying to you and how it touches your life today.
- **Oratio (Respond/Pray):** Read the passage a third time. Talk to God about what you have read, using the text to guide your conversation (thanksgiving, petition, repentance).
- **Contemplatio (Rest):** Read the passage a final time or simply sit in silence. Rest in God’s presence, allowing the word to transform you.

Visio Divina

1. **Look** – What do I see?
2. **Reflect** – What is God stirring in me?
3. **Respond** – What do I want to say to the Lord?
4. **4.Rest** – Sit quietly in God's presence

- **Look at the Image** – Observe the art carefully. Pay attention to the details, colours, and emotions it stirs.
- **Meditate** – Reflect on how the image speaks to you. What does it reveal about God or your own faith journey?
- **Pray** – Offer a personal prayer based on your reflections, asking for guidance or expressing gratitude.
- **Contemplate** – Sit in silence, allowing God's presence to fill you through the experience.

Close with a short prayer together

- Glory Be
- A spontaneous intercession for your pupils

REMBRANDT Prodigal Son

The Father's Hands (Asymmetry): This is the focal point of the painting. The father's hands are intentionally different—the left is large and masculine (offering protection), while the right is smaller, softer, and more delicate (offering comfort). They symbolize the dual nature of God's love, acting as both father and mother.

The Embrace of Unconditional Love: The father does not look at the son with judgment, but with eyes closed in tender, quiet compassion. He is not just welcoming him back but shielding him.

The Son's Abject Condition: The younger son is kneeling, completely broken and humbled. His head is shaved like a slave or prisoner, his clothes are rags, and his shoes are falling off (one lies nearby, the other is worn through). His right foot is dirty, while his left foot shows signs of wounding.

Chiaroscuro (Light and Shadow): Rembrandt uses a dramatic contrast where a warm, golden light focuses solely on the father and son, separating them from the dark, shadowy world around them. This highlights the intimacy and spiritual nature of the scene.

The Watchers in the Dark: Several figures stand in the shadows, creating a sense of mystery. The most important is the elder brother on the right, who stands upright with arms crossed, holding a staff—a pose of judgment and resentment, unable to share in the joy of forgiveness.

The Subtlety of "Return": Unlike earlier, more dramatic versions of this story, this painting is remarkably quiet, focusing on stillness, rest, and the internal experience of grace rather than the external action of a feast.

The painting is essentially a meditation on forgiveness, reflecting Rembrandt's own life experiences of loss and his return to faith.

Palm Sunday

The Entry into Jerusalem – Giotto

- Strong gestures and facial expressions
- Clear contrast between joy and tension
- Invites reflection on welcome and rejection

Reflection prompt

- Where do I see myself in this crowd?
 - When do I welcome Christ enthusiastically... and when do I hold back?
-

Holy Thursday

The Last Supper – Leonardo da Vinci

- Captures the emotional moment after Jesus announces betrayal
- Highlights relationship and communion

Reflection prompt:

- Where would I be seated at this table?
 - What does Jesus' self-giving teach me about my vocation?
-

The Washing of the Feet – Ford Madox Brown

This painting shows a moment from the Bible when Jesus washes His friends' feet.

In those days, people walked everywhere in sandals, so their feet got very dusty and dirty. Usually, a servant would wash guests' feet. But here, Jesus — who is their teacher and leader — kneels down to wash Peter's feet.

How does Peter feel?

Peter looks surprised and uncomfortable. He thinks Jesus should not be doing a servant's job. He feels it is backwards!

But Jesus is teaching him something very important.

What is Jesus teaching?

Jesus is showing that:

- Leaders should serve others.
- No job is too small if it helps someone.
- Loving others means being humble.

He wants His friends to treat each other with kindness and service.

What do we notice in the painting?

- Jesus is kneeling, which shows humility.
- The room feels crowded and real, like an ordinary home.
- The disciples around them are watching closely.
- The colours are warm and earthy, making the scene feel serious and important.

The artist painted the people to look very human and natural — not perfect or glowing — so we can imagine what it might have really been like.

What can we learn from this picture?

- It is good to help others.
- Being important does not mean being bossy.
- We can show love by serving, even in small ways.

Good Friday

The Crucifixion – Matthias Grünewald (Isenheim Altarpiece)

- Raw, honest suffering
- Powerful for reflecting on student pain anxiety, family struggles, grief and brokenness

Reflection prompt:

- Where do I see suffering in my school community?
- How does Christ's suffering meet that reality?

Christ Carrying the Cross – El Greco

Why it works:

- Intense eye contact
- Deep emotional focus

Reflection prompt:

- What cross am I carrying this year?
 - How is Christ looking at me in the midst of it?
-

Holy Saturday

The Entombment of Christ – Caravaggio

- Heavy silence
- Grief, waiting, uncertainty

Reflection prompt:

- Where in my life am I in Holy Saturday—waiting without answers?
 - How do I teach hope when resurrection is not yet visible?
-

Easter Vigil / Resurrection

The Resurrection – Piero della Francesca

- Calm authority
- Victory without drama

Reflection prompt:

- Where is new life emerging in my students?
 - How am I called to be a witness to hope?
-

The Agony in the Garden by Giovanni Bellini:

This painting shows a very quiet and important moment in the life of Jesus.

It is nighttime, and Jesus is in a garden. He has walked away from his friends to pray. You can see Him kneeling on a rock, looking up at the sky. His face looks serious and a little sad, as if He knows something hard is about to happen.

Above Him, in the glowing light of the sky, a tiny angel appears. The angel is holding a cup. The cup is a symbol. It reminds us that Jesus is about to face suffering, but He is bravely accepting what God is asking Him to do.

In the background, His friends — Peter, James, and John — are fast asleep on the ground. They were supposed to stay awake and pray, but they are tired. This makes the moment feel lonely.

Far in the distance, you can see tiny figures walking toward the garden. They are soldiers coming to arrest Jesus. Even though this is happening, the painting feels calm and still, like the world is holding its breath.

The colors are soft and gentle — cool blues, warm browns, and the pale light of early morning. The hills and sky look peaceful, almost beautiful. This reminds us that even in sad or scary moments, God is still present.

The painting helps us think about:

- Being brave when something is difficult
- Praying when we feel afraid
- Trusting God, even when we don't understand everything

It is a quiet picture, but it tells a very big story.

Road to Emmaus

BY KATHRYN KIMBALL

Artist: Michael Torevell (England, Contemporary)

Artist Michael Torevell states that his desire in *Road to Emmaus* was to paint a setting that leaves the viewer with a sense of surprise and wonder — a setting where the viewer can enter the story and catch a glimpse of the divine nature of God. His use of a stylized landscape that incorporates many details but little specificity invites us into the narrative. Buildings that resemble modern-day structures also recall ancient villages. Three crosses on a hill capture our attention and anchor us to the Crucifixion story.

Luke 24:15-27 tells us that Cleopas and another traveller were discussing the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion when another person joined them. The unknown traveller reminded them of Jesus' teachings. They were unaware that it was Jesus who appeared to them as an ordinary traveller along the road. As Torevell depicts it, the road could be anywhere, and the blurred faces of the travellers could be anyone.

An Emmaus experience can occur along any “road” that we travel in life — during times of grief, the Lenten journey, or even in ordinary times. Like Cleopas, we might encounter the risen Christ where and when we least expect it. Will we recognize Jesus? Perhaps others traveling the road will see Christ within us as we share the joyful news of our risen Saviour.

Imaginative Prayer

- **Set the Scene:** Read a short Gospel passage or story slowly, allowing time for the imagination to engage with the narrative.
- **Use the Senses:** Encourage children to imagine what they see, hear, smell, and feel in the story.
- **Enter the Story:** Ask children to place themselves in the scene—perhaps as a bystander, a disciple, or someone being healed.
- **Engage with Jesus:** Invite children to talk to Jesus in their imagination, asking him questions or listening to what he might say.
- **Follow Up:** After the prayer, ask, "What was that like?", "Where were you?", or "What did Jesus say to you?".