***Lectio Divina***

 Among the various schools of prayer, lectio divina has perhaps the longest, the most significant, and the most venerable tradition. Looking back through the millennia of salvation history we can see how a lectio divina type of prayer was central to the spiritual practice of the faithful in ancient Israel. The teachers read Scripture to the people and the people would memorize the scriptures and meditate over them “day and night” (Ps 1:2).

 One form of praying with Scriptures that Catholics have used for centuries is called *lectio divina* (LECT-see-oh dih-VEE-nah), Latin for “sacred reading.” This is a way of spending time with the Word of God using a special form of reading and listening so that you can hear God “with the ear of our heart” (St. Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*). This form of prayer follows four steps.

**1**. *Lectio* (reading)- slowly and prayerfully read aloud a brief Scripture passage, repeating the passage up to three times after a silent pause between each reading. Allow a word or phrase to speak to you in a special way.

**2*.*** *Meditatio* (meditation)- silently reflect, for a few minutes, upon the word or phrase that is speaking to you. In doing so, take the word or phrase to heart and allow it to interact with your own thoughts, hopes, desires, and memories.

**3.** *Oratio* (prayer)- enter into a silent dialogue with God for a few minutes, speaking as one friend speaks to another and allowing yourself to be touched and changed by God’s Word.

**4.**  *Contemplatio* (contemplation)- simply rest silently and prayerfully in God’s embrace for a few minutes. There is no need for words here; by letting go of your own words, allow the Word of God to speak to your heart in silence.