PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE
Personal *Lectio Divina* Process

Many people think of their personal devotional life consisting of reading the Bible—then saying your prayers. This is an exercise where the two come together: *praying the scriptures.* In the fifth century, Benedict gave us a simple method: **lectio divina**—the "divine" or "prayerful" reading of scriptures. Read a short text prayerfully—over and over, like a cow chewing her cud—until you are led to "delight in God." The twelfth-century, Guigo II divided Benedict's *Lectio* into a fourfold experience, beginning with silence:

(1.) ***Reading***: like a cow grazing, use a lectionary or other method to select and read a brief portion of scripture silently, aloud—or both ways;

(2.) ***Meditating***: like a cow chewing fresh grass, re-read it, ponder the context—allow meanings and associations to come to mind;

(3.) ***Praying***: like a cow regurgitating its sour cud, ruminate on the text, let it get down in your gut and connect with your raw feelings;

(4.) ***Contemplating***: like the cow resting, digesting, allow the Word you need to get into your bloodstream.

Contemplation is what the Psalmist means by "Delight yourself in the Lord, and [God] will give you the desires of your heart" (37:4). It is Luke's image of Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening. Speaking of prayer, John Calvin wrote that Jesus "taught us to seek a retreat that would help us to descend into our heart… That God… will be near to us in the affections of our hearts" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion,* III.20.29).

When you pray with scripture the Word becomes flesh in us embodied in service. Three options for praying with scripture have been passed down through the centuries:

(a.) Use the imagination to visualize a scene in a narrative text.

(b.) Converse with the various characters (reflect inwardly, or by using a journal).

(c.) Repeat a short phrase that lures you, like a centering prayer. Keep your journal and Bible with you during personal prayer times.